

SEATTLE LABOR CHORUS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
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KELLY GARLAND OF SEATTLE LABOR CHORUS,
INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF THEATRICAL STAGE EMPLOYEES, LOCAL 15

INTERVIEWEE: KELLY GARLAND

INTERVIEWER: CINDY COLE

SUBJECTS: FOSTER CARE; CHILD ABUSE; CHRISTIANITY; BORN-AGAIN; RONALD REAGAN; PIANO; GUITAR; MUSIC LESSONS; GIRLS' CHOIR; WOMEN SINGERS; UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA; PERFORMANCE; ASPEN, COLORADO; CHRISTIAN BANDS; TRAVEL; VISA; ADVENTURES; BUSKING; BECKENHAM CHORALE; INDIA; MOTORCYCLE ACCIDENT; YOGA TEACHER; AYURVEDIC MEDICINE; BUMBERSHOOT; SEATTLE; INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF THEATRICAL STAGE EMPLOYEES, LOCAL 15; HOMELESSNESS; TRANSITIONAL HOUSING; APARTMENT SEARCH; COURT REPORTER; FINANCIAL AID; POLITICAL AWARENESS; 2016 ELECTION

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[00:00:00] **CINDY COLE:** This is an interview with Kelly Garland for the Seattle Labor Chorus History Project. It is being recorded in Seattle, Washington on February 5, 2016. The interviewer is Cindy Cole. So, Kelly, you want to go ahead?

[00:00:24] **KELLY GARLAND:** [Sings]

*My life has been a tapestry of rich and royal hue
An everlasting vision of the ever-changing view
A wondrous woven magic in bits of blue and gold
A tapestry to feel and see, impossible to hold.*

- Carole King

[00:00:57] **CINDY:** Thank you. Kelly, why don't you just tell us where you were born and when and a little bit about your family.

[00:01:05] **KELLY:** I was born in Santa Monica, California in 1962. My mother, when she was younger, she was from Ohio and she wanted to babysit the kids next door, and my grandmother told her no because they had polio. Polio, as you know, was going around big back then. I guess my mother kept urging her, could she, could she, and my grandmother finally said, "Yes, you can, but you must stay out of the house and just kind of check on the kids from there."

I guess my mother ended up going into the house and she caught polio and the kids recovered. So the rest of her life, she had some paralysis and walked with a cane. It affected her in her school-age years. She was always trying to be accepted and play catch-up with everybody else, and I think, from what I understand, that she might have been a little bit promiscuous in trying to be accepted. I think I remember my grandfather once telling me that she had been busted in the back of a car with a man. I think she might have been in a home or two for pregnant teenagers. But anyhow, when she was 18. She hitchhiked all by herself from Ohio to California.

I don't know anything really about my dad or how they met, but they got married, as far as I know. They had my brother, and we're not sure but we think that he has a different father because he doesn't look like my sister and I. He looks different.

My mom and dad and my older brother, who's like three years older than me, and my older sister, who's two years older than me, and then me. All I really remember is my stepfather, Ernie. I used to have some photographs with my real father holding me when I was a baby. But I found out at some point that he went to prison. He got arrested back in the "Day of the Doors" in Venice Beach selling drugs, and he went to prison for it.

At some point in between my travels, when I lived in California, I spoke to this Afghanistan woman who was my neighbor and she found out my story—or maybe it was a lady in New Zealand—and she says, "Oh, Kelly, you need to find your father." And I never felt so much urgency about it, so at some point later when I came home after my travels, I did look for him. I was in my twenties then and I wrote the prison that he was at and they said that he hadn't been in prison for years; that he had been on probation for years. Because I'm in my twenties and it was when I was a baby that he went to prison. And that even if they knew where he was, they would have to have his permission first.

So, he went to prison for selling drugs, and then as far as I know, I think my mom remarried this person named Ernie. She really wasn't taking care of us and my stepfather, Ernie, called the social welfare people and kind of reported her. I guess the school reported us, too, because I found out somewhat recently from my brother that we didn't have any food at school and we were always sitting around others and kind of trying to eat their food or beg off of them.

So, between the school and my foster father, they came by. She wasn't taking care of us. I think she'd been in a home a time or two for some mental issues, and when she came out—I'll get to that in a moment. But anyhow, we got taken away. I was five years old. She died sometime later when I was in my first foster home, I think it was, and I was six years old. I guess she kind of OD'd on the medicine they gave her from the mental home.

These are all things I learned years ago, and that's what I think what happened. But my uncle told me that he came by once because she wouldn't pick up the phone, and he found her dead in bed. So I went into my first foster home. And I found out from my social worker that she was crying, "My baby! My baby! Don't take away my baby" when we left. They put my brother and sister in the same home, and then they put me in a home. And I'm not really sure how much those people loved me. I just know that my little brother used to ruin my stuff when I went to school, and then one day they came to me and said, "Hey, do you want to live on a farm?" And I thought, yeah, great. Animals. We'll go live on a farm.

When she said that to me, I thought we were all going to live on a farm. But what she was trying to say is that I was going to live on a farm for myself in my next foster home. I went to my next foster home, and I loved my home. I had a little sister who had been adopted by this family. I lived here from the ages of seven to nine. There was no competition between my sister and I. We just loved it. We had horses and chickens. I was doing horse shows and bareback riding and barrel riding and all sorts of stuff back then, so I would have grown up to be like a cowgirl had I stayed with them. I loved my horse, and I was out in the country, and our chickens were on Gunsmoke and my mom was really good to me.

I don't know if you want me to go through all the issues of why I left all these homes, but if you want me to, let me know.

[00:06:37] **CINDY:** Well, as it was you were transferred to another home because of [unintelligible] .

[00:06:45] **KELLY:** Yes, I was transferred to another home because the man was not quite right. I came home and my mom was in tears off the bus and walked me down a long country road to our country house and kind of rode all over me and was crying and I was like "What's wrong? What's wrong?" And she told me that I had to leave.

So, I went to my next foster home. That was my third foster home. The lady was Latino, I don't remember what country she was from. But I was very intrigued that there was another language and it was called Spanish, and my first words in Spanish from her were all cuss words, which I won't repeat here. But that was big for me to be opened up to culture and language. I loved that. But my dad was an idiot, my foster father, and he used to do abusive things and lock me out. Just not so good.

Anyhow, they called the social worker and I went on to my next home. This is back in the late 60s, I guess, when pantsuits were big. I loved pantsuits, and I had this purple pantsuit that I had from them. I just knew when I came home from school before the social worker came to pick me up, they were going to take it from me and hide it. Even though I packed my stuff and hid that, I came home and it was no longer mine, so I was really disappointed about that.

Then I go into my fourth foster home. In my fourth foster home, I move in with my sister and brother, the one that they moved into all together. This was a crazy home. I lived there for four years. I went through puberty there.

[00:08:19] **CINDY:** Something about you took some guitar lessons or piano lessons in that period?

[00:08:24] **KELLY:** Okay. Wait, I'm sorry. Forget it. I am in my fourth home. My fifth home is the crazy home. That's where I went through puberty. So now I'm nine to elevenish and I'm going into my fourth foster home with my sister and brother—that part of it's true—and my mother that I loved so dearly from the country home and my second home, she was really lovely and she gave me piano lessons. That was my first sort of part with music really, as far as instruction goes. She didn't want to make my sister feel jealous, so even though she didn't know my sister, she gave her piano lessons, too.

At the same time, I took guitar lessons. But as far as musically before that, in my second home with this nice lady in the country, I had a boyfriend named Mark Johnson and we used to go out during recess at school, and all the kids would be playing basketball or ball on the pavement, but we'd be far away across the field up against the fence where the trees are and we were singing and playing guitar and being musos and folkies and stuff. We loved it. It was just me and him and one other person. I think it was a guy, but I can't remember. But that was like really big.

Then the home that I just came out of—the third foster home where the dad didn't like me and he was a big of an idiot and they took my pantsuit—in that home, they used to have people over and the Supremes were big then. They'd turn on the Supremes at their house parties and I'd stand in front of the living room and sing and dance for everybody. I'd be Diana Ross and the Supremes. [laughing] So that was a big thing for me.

So, now I'm in my fourth home with my brother and sister. There were some issues. I don't know what you want me to go as far as like when the police came and picked me up at school. I don't mind.

[00:10:09] **CINDY:** Well, things happened.

[00:10:12] **KELLY:** Yeah, so I got taken away by a police car from school with all my friends waving to me while I was in the back of a police car. It wasn't because of something I did, they were taking me to my new home.

What can I say about that place? Just that there were some issues there. Musically was a big dud, but obviously musically at that time, I was seven to nine, so I was starting to sing a lot of Barbra Streisand and Karen Carpenter and stuff that was coming in at that time. Not really so much after that. I went to junior high.

So far, the very beginning is my life is being very affected. First it's affected by the decisions that the adults in my life are making or not making, that is, my grandparents not taking me, my aunt and uncles not taking me. They were a little bit young but it would have been nice if my grandparents would have sort of stood up for me. I don't really know what the circumstances the rules are, but the decisions that adults make affect children. They don't really have any control, or they have no clue of what's going on. But these are the events that led up to my life. And it wasn't to stop there because the decisions that adults made in the successive homes after that continued to affect my life. So, that's the domino effect of it all.

Now I'm leaving my fourth home and I'm going into my fifth home, which is a crazy home, which is this home right here. And I just want to say that in my second home, in the country home that I loved my foster mother because I know she loved me. And that's when we had the big earthquake in 69, and I used to wake up and she'd put the rollers in the pot and heat them up in boiling water and then put them on our hair. She was good to me.

But she was a Christian, I believe, and I didn't know what that was. I just know we went to a community church, I think. I don't really remember anything, but I was very much introduced to the idea of God and Jesus back then. And I remember there were little pieces of paper that said, "If you believe in Jesus Christ and the

Lord is your Lord and Savior, sign here.” And I used to believe so I’d sign them everywhere. So that was my first introduction. My third home, nothing. My fourth home was Jehovah’s Witness, actually. Went to a few things there, but I don’t know how much followers there were. That was where I lived with my brother and sister first.

We all got taken out of that home. My sister got taken to MacLaren Hall, which is a home for teenagers, and me and my brother got put in another foster home, waiting for my sister for when she was done with MacLaren Hall. This was the home that was a crazy home, when I went through puberty and my sister joined us. They were kind of really big on this family day and family night, but they were so abusive. We did drugs and angel dust. Once, they asked me for money when my sister and I were walking home from school. I didn’t even think about a bank account but I guess I had one, and I didn’t give it to them. But they wanted my money so they could go out and buy alcohol to have a neighborhood party for everybody. They were giving my brother acid. There was a lot of cigarettes, dope, alcohol, acid, PCP. All sorts of stuff was coming in there.

My dad was in the Navy and he was having a lot of problems and he got kicked out, always trying to pick up on people. Then he opened a CB shop. There was just a lot of tension between them, too. My mom, she was full-blooded Italian and she was not a very nice girl. She was abusive, and we were just used as slaves in that home and their children could take advantage of us. It was just destructive.

As I got older I began to rebel, and finally I just disappeared one night. When I came back, I was kicked out. They dropped me off at the social welfare office all by myself with all my stuff at 7:00 in the morning, before any of the people even showed up, so the social workers were very angry at my foster home.

My sister stayed there. She always tried to comply and she got along, whereas my brother and I—my brother wasn’t a bad guy, though. None of us were. We obeyed. And they put me in a corner, they told me I had my head up my butt and made me streak, walk naked in front of the other kids, and they made my brother walk naked around the pool in front of us. When he came back from the Navy, for no reason, they just put all his stuff out in the driveway, so his first day back from bootcamp was that.

They were just crazy, abusive people, basically. I found out a few years later after I left that they got their license taken away by the State of California, which was awesome.

But, yeah, I kind of got older, and that’s when I started getting more rebellious because I got tired of being picked on and abused and all that.

My sister is still living there. My brother is old enough to be out. He’s back in the service, and I’m still young enough so I have to go and do some more foster homes after that. I go into my next one, very conservative Christian home.

Oh, by the way, in the home that I just came out of, we were of the Bahai faith there, which I really loved. I really loved the Bahai faith. They weren’t really into it, but once in a while if we did anything, it was with the Bahais. That might have had to do with free food. [laughing] Because we had great feeds together with these people.

So now I’m in my conservative Christian home. It’s very hard this time. I was 16. I’d already had all these five homes before me, so now I’m in my sixth home. I moved in as the oldest girl. This family was kind of strict, and I had to be the example for all the girls younger than me. She was really trying to mold me, not gradually but quite quickly or severely into what she wanted me to be, and I think that was a lot of the trouble because I had lived in totally different homes.

But the one thing that we did was go to church. I remember going and it having a big impact on me, the songs. We had some youth person come and speak to us about Christ and I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior. I didn't know much about what we were supposed to do or what we were not supposed to do or all the benefits or anything. I just knew that God loved me and I accepted his Son.

Now, what I went through at the house, though, was kind of hard. They were very strict and kind of lording it over. I just got tired of it. I couldn't do anything that my 14-year-old sister couldn't do. It was actually the home before that that I was always in trouble. I was always in restriction. One time I got a C and my dad takes the report card, he underlines the C, puts a red thing through it and puts "restricted," so when my social worker came by for his visit and he goes "Kelly, what's this thing with the C underlined and 'restricted'? Are you on restriction for this?" And I said, "Yeah." Then when he told my dad—the bad family—my dad when the social worker left just freaked out on me. He says, "And you told him?" I said, "It says it right there on the report card."

So now I'm in the Christian conservative home. I wasn't necessarily always in trouble here. It's just I was always getting lorded over, and everything that I wanted to do, I could never do. I couldn't do it if my 14-year-old sister couldn't do it. It was just too much, man. I just couldn't please her. I just could not please her. I didn't like Spam and it just got built up.

I had a job after school. I used to answer the phones for the school district, and I remember my mother had called me up and complained about something else and I just broke down because it was so exasperating trying to please all these different families with their different ways of handling things, their different beliefs, their different expectations. It's exasperating for a child. And I remember the people at work took me off the phones and let me sit for a while. They were all these lovely ladies, and I remember one day—I say this rather meekly and with a little bit of embarrassment—I loved them and I thought they loved me, and I went to one lady and asked her if I could live with her, if she would be my foster mother. She said, "No," But I remember doing that. That's how exasperated I was. I just called my social worker once and I said, "I don't want to live here anymore."

Just before I left, though, I want you to know that my mother came to me with humility—and I'll give her credit for this—she said, "Kelly, I've been trying to be God over you instead of just letting God be over you, and I'm trying to force you to be a certain way. I'm sorry." I love that that she said that, because she voiced exactly what I couldn't at my age but what I was feeling. And it showed some humility on her part, which I needed to see, but I still decided to go anyhow. So, I went.

By the way, while I lived in that home, right after I moved there, I got a phone call while we were eating dinner. They answered the phone and they came to the table. "Kelly, it's for you." And it was my foster day from the previous home because he was getting investigated. And all he said to me was, "Oh, is this Kelly Garland?" And I said, "Yeah." And he said, "Do you live at such and such and is this your phone number?" And I said, "Yeah." He says, "Okay, thank you." And he hung up. When I came back to the table, I realized it was him and he was just showing me that he knew where I lived in case I said anything about him. That's another side note.

Anyhow, got out of the very conservative Christian home. Got introduced to Christ. They put me a girls' home because they thought, hey, this girl hasn't really got any issues. She just needs some independence.

But I went into this girls' home with two runaways, one girl that had three or four kids by the time she was 17, and another girl who just got out of a mental home, like we would equivocate it to Western here. The girls were quite different than me because I'd never run away, I'd never had a child, I wasn't a drug addict, I wasn't a

thief, I got good grades in school. I just couldn't find a family that just wouldn't try to direct me or abuse me or control me in some way. It was ridiculous.

Anyhow, they thought that would be good for me. It was girls' home, so it was owned by a lady but she hired a housemother. The housemother was older, she was an alcoholic, she played the girls against each other. She wanted her favorites, and if you didn't play her game, you were on her you-know-what list. And I was on that list.

She wouldn't believe that I had a brother and sister. We couldn't go out in the front yard for what the neighbors would think. We couldn't go out in the backyard for what the neighbors would think. All we could do was go to school. We had chores, and then it was all competitive and we put each other down. Then if we had to talk to somebody, the payphone was right in the kitchen, so there was no privacy. It was like a jail. It was terrible.

I hated it. I was losing it. Because I lived in a girls' home, I had to go see a psychologist or psychiatrist once a month. All of us girls did. It was part of the law living in a girls' home. So the first day I got there, I just let it out. I said, "I can't go anywhere, I can't do anything. They won't even call my social worker to see if I have a brother and sister. I told them that I did but I can't talk to them on the phone. We can't go in the front yard, we can't go in the backyard. It's just badgering and playing up against each other at home. I had a whole bag of change. They've taken it from me. Every time I have my period, I have to tell them and they'll give me a certain amount of stuff. They won't just let me take it as I need it. It's all very controlling."

I said, "I was in my bedroom. They gave me and Claire, the girl who had three children at 17, our own bedrooms because we're the older ones. It's all tell on each other and see who could put each other down. So I was in my room lighting my eyeliner to put it on my eye and someone told on me that I was lighting matches or fires in my room. And I told her, 'No, I was just doing this to go like this. It makes it come off easier.' And she took me out of my room and I had to share one of the 14-year-olds, and she put one of her favorites in the room."

So, it was all like that, and I just let it out to this guy. I loved him. And I didn't know it at the time, but I found out some months later thank God I only lived there for about three months but it felt like forever. He called up my social worker and said, "You need to take her out of this home. She doesn't belong here. She hasn't got issues and she's exasperated. She doesn't belong there."

My social worker told me this when she did come to take me to my next place, she said the reason she didn't do anything about it is because that was my seventh home by then, and she figured if everything was going okay then she'd leave me—which I can understand after seven homes. But anyhow, one day again I was working at high school after school and I said, "I've got to call my social worker, you guys. I need some privacy." So I went outside and I guess I just broke down because on the other end the social worker was saying, "Sorry, you can't talk to them anymore unless they call you." I said, "You need to really put her on the phone. I'm going to run away because I'm suffering here."

And I guess at that point I broke down, because the girls that worked with me at school were around me. And finally they put my social worker on the phone, I told her everything, and she says, "Kelly, I'm coming to get you."

So, I moved out three months later. They drove me to my last home. This home, I really loved. It was a single mother. I was hoping she loved me, and for the most part, we got on. But words are different than actions. She wasn't abusive, I wouldn't say the lady was abusive, so that's why there was more love. But her actions spoke

louder than her words. You begin at that age to know what is love and what isn't, and you can't be BS'ed anymore like you can when you're a younger child.

I graduated and I was going to college. The most important thing about that home is that I was 19 years old, and my social worker came to the house and he told my mom that if I wasn't in a trade school or university, I'd have to go out. They wouldn't support me anymore as a foster home. Because as a foster home, you get money every month for your foster child.

So she came to me and told me this, and at first I thought that was just an excuse she was making, even though I saw the social worker come to the home. But I found out years later, not so long after I moved to Seattle, that that actually was true that because Ronald Reagan became president that any foster child who was over the age of 18 but not attending a university or a trade school had to get out.

So that kind of changed my life. I did ask my mother despite that, I said, "Well, can I stay?" Because I thought she loved me, I said, "Can I stay here anyhow?" And she said, "No."

So I got to move in with my uncle, and my sister's life was going downhill on a spiral. She was getting involved with drugs and bad men. He had taken us out not so long before that and said, "Hey, Laurie, so you want to come live with us?" And Laurie wouldn't take him up on it, and then suddenly I needed a place. He lived right next to the college I was going to and I thought that would be perfect. So I asked him and he said, "Yeah."

Now, there was always a little tension between me and my aunt because she didn't really want me there. I loved it, though. You have no idea what it was like to be a foster child and then to say, "I'm living with my uncle. This is my mother's brother. These people are related to me with blood and they want me there." I was so [chaffed?] . It was just the best. The best feeling.

I used to help mow the lawn and take care of the dog and pick up the dog poop, and me and my aunt would bake together. But after a while, I was in their space and they didn't want me there. They said that and I was kind of sad and I didn't say anything and I was planning to move out, so I was looking for a room for rent on campus. Then he came back and he said, "Oh, I'm sorry, Kelly. You can stay here if you want." Then he finally came to me again sometime later and said, "Okay, Aunt Judy is tired of it. You've got to go." I said, "Okay."

I found this place for free room and board at my college. I want to go back to music and just touch on music. That is, when I was with my—also, back in my fourth foster home where my second foster home mother paid for my piano lessons as well as my sister's [at my?] fourth foster home. And at the same time, when I started playing guitar, I got involved with a chorus there called the Girls' [Quota?] Choir, and it was managed by Miss America. Either at that time or some years before that she was Miss America, so now she wanted to have a girls' choir.

So she had a lot of open doors, and that's the first time I learned about really singing technically, and with other people. So we sang at City Hall, we sang at TV. In fact, years later I saw myself on TV as a little girl. It blew me away. We sang at City Hall, TV, Disneyland. We sang a lot of places. So that was another musical thing, and then I did the guitar/piano, and then I went into the crazy home. Didn't do a lot of stuff there, but obviously I was a teenager. I was very influenced by Fleetwood Mac and a lot of female singers, a lot of female folk-rocky singers at that time. That really came into my life.

So I'm in my next home. Not so much music there. Just like to sing at church, except I did take a guitar class, but there was such a cute guy in there, I could hardly focus on the guitar. Then we're into my girls' home. Yeah,

that was just dry for everything. Now we're in my last home, graduating from high school, first year at community college.

So now I started getting into I was singing with a choir and singing a lot in college, and I had a singing class, too. Again, the beginnings, it felt like. I can remember we all had to break into groups, and this girl picked a Beatles song and I've got to be honest, I'm not the biggest Beatles fan, I'm more of a Paul McCartney fan, because my generation is a little bit after that. They're great, but I was more of a Paul and the rest of the guys on their own as the years went by. She wanted to do this song:

There are places I remember all my life . . .

And I didn't know the song. I never heard the song. To me that would have been their least popular song and I didn't know it. But we had to learn it and then we had to stand in front of the class and sing it, not together but separately.

So I had that class and then I was in the chorus in college. So that was music there.

When I left my uncle's house, I was still in community college. I found free room and board by watching a mentally retarded girl who had had the cord wrapped around her neck when she was born for free room and board.

Now, I didn't know what I was doing or where I was going or what I was focused on at that point. I just basically had three things in life that I wanted to do when I was little. That is, I wanted to get married and have children, I wanted to travel around the world and I wanted to be a singer.

My traveling thing came quite early, and I think a lot of it came because I was moving around, so I got to see that people lived differently. So it kind of intrigued me, even though it was a pain in the butt, to be quite honest. When I was eight years old in the good home, the home in the country, my mother told me years later that I told her I was going to travel around the world by myself. Years later, when I was in another home in junior high and I was 12 years old, we had to do a report, a career report—it was like a career class—and I thought that I was going to be an airline stewardess. I'd never been on a plane before, and I thought I was going to have like boyfriends everywhere and just travel by plane. Right? So that was the beginning of the whole traveling thing.

So then you kind of get to high school, and you know what high school's like. You're pushed by your peers. Okay, everyone else is going to college. Maybe that's what I should do. I'll go to college. I don't know what I'm doing in college, what I want to become, but I guess that's what everyone is doing so I'll do it.

So, I applied. I got accepted to UC Santa Barbara. I went looking for a room. I had a bike only at that time. Or, no, I had a car still, that's right, but I had already sold it to get a bike so I could have a bike at UC Santa Barbara. So, getting back and forth to UC Santa Barbara and finding a place to live wasn't easy. I found a place in Goleta, not in Isla Vista like I wanted to, where the college is actually located. I found a room for rent with a mean lady who smoked a lot and all her walls were yellow. She just wasn't very nice, and I stayed in my room a lot. I didn't feel comfortable around her. But she also used to compare me with her daughter, so I think she knew I was a little bit confused about what I'm doing there in school, and her daughter was very scholastic and, of course, had all this parental support.

So basically, I just started with whatever requirements they told me to go to, and one of them was some general electives, so I did art and I got in this art class and the teacher had all this indigenous North American Indian

designs. People were all around me taking notes of all the Anglos, and I was like, oh my god, I cannot do this. I don't even want to know this. I'm not going to remember it. I don't care to remember it.

So, in the first couple days of choosing your classes: "Well, what do you want to do, Kelly?" "Well, I want to be a part of music." "Okay." So they put me in this theory class, and I didn't really know a lot about classical music then—just a little—and I liked it, but this guy would sit down on a piano and play like three notes and ask us the students, "What is this? Medieval or Baroque? What kind of classical?" And I was like, oh my god, are you serious?

I wanted to create music, be a part of performing music. "So, singing. You should have said that, Kelly. Okay, let's get you in a singing class." So they put me in a singing class, and I go to the singing class and on the door it says, "Singing class tryouts for this semester finished. No more openings."

And it crushed me. I should have pushed through that door and tried anyhow, but I just walked away. Because I was coming to the end of my rope with school. I was [confused?]. I didn't know what the heck I was doing. It seemed like everybody had some support but me.

My last straw was I went to the counseling center and I took a career counseling test. When I was through with it the man told me that I should be a waitress or a hairdresser. I didn't want to be a hairdresser, and I'd already been a waitress and I just said, "You know what? I think not. I think school's not for me."

My friend in Los Angeles, whose job I had taken—she left to do something else and I took her hosting job at a restaurant. We stayed friends. She was from New York. She was going to New York for Christmas, and I called her up and I said, "Barbara, can I go to New York with you?" And she says, "Yeah."

I went to all my classes and I got pass/no pass, so that means that it doesn't look bad on your record. You can always go back. Because if you just disappear, you'll get a fail. Tests were coming up at school and I worked at the deli making sandwiches on campus, so I asked everybody, hey, if anybody wants to give me their hours while they're taking tests and studying—so all these people gave me their hours.

I saved my money, quit school, left this place, went back down to L.A., met my friend, we went to New York for two weeks. And that was sort of the beginning. Then I had to find a place to rent and a job. I always found someplace close by that I could walk to because I didn't have a car, or I could bus to. I found a place.

While I was in community college in L.A., at Pierce College in Woodland Hills, I belonged to the ski club, so I met people within that club. And we used to go to various states and resorts and go on ski trips. Some years later, after I had gone to university for only a month and was back in the Valley, one of my friends called up another friend and she goes "Hey! Do you want to move to Aspen, Colorado?" My friend goes "No, but call Kelly. She'll go." So this girl calls me and I'm like, yes! That's the ticket. I was moving away from what you were supposed to do or what's required, what everybody else is doing, and I decided to go back to the traveling thing because that's what I wanted to do all my life, and the school thing just didn't seem like it was happening for me.

So, we saved our money, and on a very hot, humid day, man, I think we found an apartment before we went out there through the paper. And on a very hot, humid day in L.A., we had her parents take us to the train station. It was like 85, 90 percent humidity. It was just crazy that day, trying to move all our stuff. We put all our stuff and took a train all the way to Aspen, Colorado, and I starting living there. I'd skied once before when I was 18, but this was the second time I skied when I moved to Aspen. I worked on the mountain. I had a few jobs up there.

Got fired a time or two, but I had lots of jobs. Had this apartment. Me and Elaine [unintelligible] together, but we went through a stream full of crazy roommates.

A year later, I got married to a guy that I didn't know that long who I should have saw some red flags. It wasn't a good marriage and it wasn't a good situation. It was just a stupid decision. I knew I almost shouldn't do it before I did it, but I figured that's what God wanted me to do. I was just kind of reading things wrong. Because it was like the normal, expected thing to do because the alternative was what I had really planned on doing and that was traveling.

I was planning on going to go live in the Virgin Islands. And yet, all my friends had been married since they were 17, 18 and I was like 23, 24 so I thought I was old. So I thought, okay, I'll get married, but it was a stupid decision. But also the thing is we were around a bunch of musicians, so here was my time to be in a band like I'd always wanted to be. Even though they didn't know me and the other girls were the singers, I thought, well, at least I can get close, because my husband was a bass player.

So, we went on a trip. It was a blue bus with a picture of Jesus painted on the side. We were just going to ride around and go to different things and talk about Jesus and share Jesus with people and play music and worship and stuff.

But, you know, people were young and immature, and people were different. And then my husband was pissing everybody off. He didn't want rules. He didn't want to be told what to do, so he left the band, which means I had to go with him because I was his wife. It was kind of hard being on the road because we were poor and it's like I really wanted to do—we were in Indiana, I remember, going through some shops thinking, gawd, I wish I could buy some of that stuff.

We ended up back in Colorado and he just kind of couldn't keep it together. He'd also had a crazy life, but he kind of took it out on me a lot. So I just said, "Okay. You know what, dude? Living with you is like living in another bad foster home. I am so oughta here." I told him months before. I used to sing that song Free Bird by Lynyrd Skynyrd and he hated it when I sang that, because it represented me and he knew it.

But I told him, he didn't like it, and then things got worse after I told him. But I left him, and I went to the airport and—oh, a major thing then was while I was working in the restaurant, I had a friend who was from New Zealand who worked in the kitchen. I was like so fascinated by her accent, and that she was from New Zealand and she was in the States. Quite frankly, I met a lot of people from Europe and various places there that were working illegally and working in Aspen, Colorado, and I thought to myself, gosh, if they can do it, why can't I do it in their country?

We talked and she said, "Yeah, come to New Zealand." That's it. I said to him, "I'm leaving you." Flew away. Went to California to visit my sister, and then got on a plane and went to my very first international trip ever. I went to New Zealand. And she ended up being a little crazy, but I learned how to work. I worked illegally. I remember working for a catering company for the politicians there. I used to sing my heart out at work there and it was like "Oh, Kelly, you've got a nice voice." Just worked around, made some money, checked the place out, made friends, traveled around. It was awesome.

Oh, and I was in Australia two weeks before that, then New Zealand for about five and a half months. Then I went to Fiji for a little while, which is cool, and then I banked in Hawaii for a while where I worked. I had my duffle bag back on me. When I first went on this trip, I didn't know anything about youth hostels or

backpackers. I didn't have a backpack, I had a duffle bag. And I didn't have any bath towels on me because I thought you stay in hotels and they provide the towels.

I had this duffle bag in Hawaii and I got a job and it was like, I didn't really have a place to stay. So I'd kind of get ready for work and I'd sneak my duffle bag somewhere. I think somebody saw me because the boss then went to the chef, Harry, who had a boat—because I worked right in Lahaina Harbor—parked there, and he lived on his boat. He was like “Hey, Harry, do you think Kelly can sleep in your boat?” So Harry came to me and told me that and said I could. But Harry was always trying to pick up on me and doing inappropriate things, so it wasn't a really good situation.

Then my sister was having issues in California. I did some modeling there in Hawaii for clothes. I had a clothing store, too, really posh clothing stuff. But then I left and I went back to California. I had to find a place to live, which was always an issue with me. Minimum money, and where are you going to stay till you find that place to live is a big thing. There's no home that you could always come back to.

I eventually worked it out. There was a couple crazy situations with crazy roommates and stuff. I think I stayed with my aunt or uncle for a night or two, but you could tell that's not something they really wanted. There just wasn't a lot to come back to, so go out, get on the street, get a job, something you can walk to. I got a job at an escrow company. That was a cool job. The people that I worked with liked me and I liked them and it was really good, because it's good to appreciate the roommates that did like you and the jobs that did like you, because I've been through a lot where there's just so much tension for no reason.

Anyhow, good job. Saved my money. My next trip was Canada and Alaska. I gave my two weeks' notice and said, “I'm getting ready to travel. I'm going to Canada and Alaska.” I went up to Canada and Alaska for about five, five and a half months. I first came to Seattle and stayed here, and God knows where I stayed. I don't even know how I found these people to stay with, so I must have had a contact somewhere. I wish I could know. It would be so fantastic.

Then I took the ferry—I don't think it runs up there. It was like a ferry that ran up to Vancouver. I think I went to Vancouver Island first—yes, I did—and I stayed there for a while. I remember volunteering in the soup kitchen there for the homeless people and just hung out there. I thought it was beautiful.

Then I went over to Vancouver and I worked illegally. I was bussing tables, and they have a social insurance number up there, which has the same amount of numbers as ours, but instead of three, four two, it's three, three, three, so I just wrote that down. And I bussed tables at this really swanky place where this lady would come in and play the harp on the weekends. Lived at the youth hostel.

Met an Australian girl there who wanted to travel more. And we looked on the board and we saw a sign from these two Australian guys who had bought a car in the State and they were coming up through Canada to go traveling in Alaska. Did anybody want to come with them and share the gas? And I was thinking about going up to Alaska so I could work in the fisheries somewhere and make a lot of money. So we got on with them. They came and met us. They had this big old American station wagon, man, so lots of places for us to sleep. And they had the whole back of the trunk filled with potatoes and beer, and this big old iron pot. We took five days to get to through the Yukon Territory, and I was the only vegetarian. So we put the beer in and all the vegetables and the spices. And they'd let me take out mine, and then they'd add the meat to theirs. Just on the side of the road, making this big old fricking up the Yukon. It was so lovely traveling with them.

Went up to Alaska. Decided I couldn't work in the fisheries because you have to work with fish heads up to your knees and thighs, and I thought, I can't do that. So I backed out of that. Everybody sort of filtered out and

went their own way. I stayed for a while. I did various little side jobs just to make a little money. I traveled around Alaska and then I came back to Canada. I was picking apples for a day, but I hated that, so I figured, I'll just go back to the States and find a real job.

So I made it back to the States again by ferries, coming through the south easterlies. I met this couple on the ferry in the south easterlies and we sort of ate dinner together. They lived in Santa Barbara, so I stayed with them a while.

Right, and that's exactly where I'm going now is I'm getting geared up for my next trip. So I visited these people, stayed with them. I think she was getting funny about her and her husband going on bike rides, so she thought she'd put me in a place to live but she didn't realize I had no money. I said, "Oh, that's all right. I'll go back."

So I went back down to the Valley and I got geared up for my next trip. So now, that's two trips and I haven't been to Europe yet. In fact, the whole thing that wanted me to travel in the first place was I wanted to go to Europe and I haven't been there yet. So, again, finding a place to live, little bit of a hassle. Went through a bumpy situation going through a few places before I could actually settle down. But finally, my brother-in-law, who my sister was divorced from, he had my nephew. I didn't know my nephew that well and I loved him and I got to develop a relationship with, and I got to stay on the couch at my brother-in-law's. I paid \$100 a month, which was great, and helped my brother-in-law, because he needed someone to watch my nephew, just to help me save up money faster.

I got a job at a mortgage company, saved my money. I worked probably for a year and a half in California. I saved up somewhere about \$15,000 and I went out and bought some good stuff. I went out and bought a really good backpack this time. There was no more one-sided duffle bag for me. I got some traveling equipment is what I did, and then I bought my ticket. So by the time I got to Europe, I had some money.

I remember, before I left, I was so close to my nephew, I was like his mother. And I used to put him on my shoulders and we'd walk around the neighborhood in California. I'd go "You see that plane up there? Aunt Kelly's going to get on a plane and I'm going traveling. But I'm going to come back and see you. I want you to know because I'm telling you now so you're ready."

So I've had a job really close by. I don't think there was a lot of music happening in that time. And then, I went to Europe. I went to Europe for six months. It was 1989. I started in May. I had my tent on me, and I still have that tent today. I traveled around to all the countries. I got to sort of the middle of Europe and I decided that everybody was going south to the Mediterranean where it was warm and cheap, and I thought, well, because of that, I'm going to go where everybody isn't going because it's not so warm and it's not so cheap. I'm going to go up to Scandinavia. I did all of Scandinavia. People loved watching me. I could put my tent up in the dark in five minutes and just pound the stakes in with my boots. I was just all about hiking there.

Went everywhere, to lots of countries, but I didn't do the south a lot then. By the time I got to Switzerland, it was about September. I was still in my tent and it was getting cold, so I decided, okay, from now on I'm going to stay in backpackers' and youth hostels, which I did. I did make it over to Hungary at that time. It was just before the wall came down.

[00:48:57] **CINDY:** What was your impression there?

[00:48:59] **KELLY:** It was so bizarre to me. Because I'd go in the shops and there's no food anywhere. Everybody's wearing black or gray. There's no color. I go get my hair done. I think I got it colored, permed and

cut or something for like \$5.00 American, something ridiculous. I remember buying a couple of shirts there that I thought were pretty—that's all I could find—and they were just a ridiculous price.

There was a lot of propaganda that you heard people talking about on both sides. The States, the other side of the wall, the Eastern Bloc. Stuff that you'd see—symbols—you'd go to the restaurant and everything was kind of controlled. It was very different than the rest of Europe. It was before the wall came down. And I had no idea the wall was coming down. I didn't go to Berlin or Germany at that time, so I didn't know a lot about that whole situation.

Basically, I came back to the States in November. I think the wall came down in like September, October. The wall came down about a week or two after I got back. So I'm kind of appreciative that I got to experience that, that part of Europe, if you will. That was my impression. It was very interesting and just bizarre.

Before I left on that trip, though, my friend from the very strict Christian home—she was a year higher than me in school and she graduated from school. I was in 11th grade. The day after she graduated, her family packed up their home and they drove to go live in Georgia. So I stood on the street waving good-bye to her. She was in the back of a U-Haul truck. Years later, when she knew I was going to Europe and traveling around, she goes “Gosh, Kelly, you've been everywhere but you've never been to see me.”

So I got back from Europe, flew into New York, flew down to North Carolina where she lived and was married and had kids at this time—and stayed with her. She worked in a sewing factory, so I thought, okay, I'll work there. She's like “You should get work here.” It was awesome there. People there always want to feed you, and I don't eat meat. “Just have this. Okay? Just have this.” But even if you're just coming by, they always make sure they have food.

They all have big gardens, too, that they go home and work on. They're like [said in a Southern accent] “Kelly, where do you get your vegetables from?” I said, “We just go to the supermarket.” They used to say to me, “You're that age and you ain't got no young'uns?” They'd say, “Kelly, you talk proper.” But I really loved it because at a certain time of day, we'd get together and pray with the ladies at work and they were lovely—those who wanted to, you know?

It was hard for my friend, though, because she was a very beautiful girl, and she got older and she had this husband she was dealing with. She also had two kids. She'd put on a lot of weight and she had so much work. I think she was depressed and overwhelmed. And then here I come and I'm free and I'm still skinny and I'm traveling around the world. It was very hard on her and it affected our relationship and she started treating me badly. I tried to get her out. “Let's go walk every morning, Donna.” Or, “Okay, I'll tell you what. Today we're going to attack the laundry room” because it was just covered in stuff. She just wouldn't do it. She was just resentful and just didn't want to walk, didn't want to do the laundry room.

I didn't know what to do, but I had to get away from her. So I went to stay with this other lovely couple, and the lady that I lived with who was a Christian was so good to me. They would have had me stay, but I was like “I'm all about traveling now. I've always wanted to go down to Fort Lauderdale and maybe go work on a boat or something.”

So, I made some money at the sewing thing and then it was time to move on. Lovely living and visiting the South. Loved it. They put me on a bus and I took a bus all the way down to Fort Lauderdale, where I meet this crazy girl from Alaska in this youth hostel. She was kind of tomboyish and she was going down to Key West, and I said, “What's that?” She says, “Oh, they're the islands way down South. You wanna go?” I said, “Yeah.”

So my whole thing of staying in Fort Lauderdale changed. But I did go down to Key West. She was funny, but she left before me and I stayed down there. I wasn't just passing through. That was the difference with me. I was staying to work.

After the youth hostel, I got a room for rent with this lady. But there was three people in the room and I don't think she wanted us anymore. She wanted to make more money and none of us wanted to pay that, so we all moved out. But I did a smart thing. I said to her, "Look, everybody's moving out now, and you want to find someone who's paying more rent, which means you're not going to make any money. How about I stay and pay you this much a week?" So I could save money, too, and also she's still getting money "till you find somebody." So I actually stayed and I got the room myself, which was great. Because my other friend went to live with this couple on a boat and there was too much domestic violence, so that went crazy for her.

But I stayed in Key West and I was just waitressing and bartending at these really popular restaurants, just crazy busy. Loving it. But, of course, when the weather gets hot, you're like, okay, I've got to get out of here. While I was down there, I met people, a lot of people go up to Martha's Vineyard, and I said, "What's that?" They said, "Oh, you don't know what Martha's Vineyard is?" Because everybody there is from the East Coast. And actually, down in Key West I met a lot of people running and hiding from the law down in Key West.

They said, "Yeah, Key West" [transcriber note: I she meant Martha's Vineyard 00:54:28] and I said, "Well, heck, I'll go there." People were going there, so I think I got a ride from somebody and I had a connection from somebody. We drove all the way up and went to Martha's Vineyard. I found a nanny position.

I first stayed with this lady who was a connection, and she was really nice—just for a couple nights—although her daughter was very spoiled. Then I went and found a job at a health food restaurant and a nanny position. I don't think the nanny people really liked me because I was Christian. I think that just bothered them, not because I was saying anything.

But then, we had some issues later because, you know, I was a nanny, and the thing about people want to do with nannies that they want to give their children the freedom to do what they want to do, but what I've noticed a lot is people don't want to teach their children the responsibilities of doing stuff. Like if you're allowed to get a snack or make a snack, you not only have the freedom but the responsibility that comes with that freedom. You need to put your stuff in the rubbish bin. And I was a nanny, I wasn't a housekeeper. But anyhow, it was the first nanny they'd hired, and their oldest just resented the fact that I was their new boss. Being a nanny can be tricky.

That was an uncomfortable situation, so I eventually just went to this store called Simply Cod and stayed at the health food store, where people like James Taylor, Carly Simon, Dan Akroyd would come through. And I worked at the clothing store in the afternoon and ended at night, so I was responsible for taking the day's intakes and putting it in the bank. So I was very protective on the main streets, like get to the bank, get the money off you. Then I had this long, gorgeous ride home on my beachcomber bike in Martha's Vineyard through the dark with the stars shining, and minimal streetlights to where I lived. It was just gorgeous. I really loved living there.

But now, it's October. Weather's changing, getting cold. So I went up to Maine to visit somebody I met in either Key West or Martha's Vineyard. Then a girl that I met in the same area—she's from Vermont, she came to Maine to have a little reunion. And then her and I went to Vermont together, and I met her dad and stayed there.

I was just making my way back to somewhere again to work and save money again. So I thought I'd take a train back, and I ended up in Chicago for my first time. It was late at night, it was cold, it was snowing. I had to wait

for the train for many hours. Then the train came and took me through Aspen, Colorado, where I visited my old friend. I really kind of wanted to work there again. This was where I was married years before. But I couldn't stay with her because she was about to have a baby and they needed that room, and I didn't have the money to carry on.

So I just carried on and I went all the way back to L.A. Again, you've got to go through the thing of, where am I going to live? Whereas most people who have families, they have a place to go back to, you know. But I stayed with a friend of mine who just didn't really care much about my traveling, but she very much wanted me to listen to her stories about her liposuction. It just shows the culture differences. Here I'd traveled the world and typical Southern California, you know? So, I stayed there.

And then I had to get a job. I had three different jobs there, and they were all close to my friend's house. I lived with her and Bob, and they weren't married but they had a nice little house and luckily, a room that I could stay there. But, yeah, it was hard. It was hard with this particular person. She's still sort of my friend now, but, I mean, she's something else. She's just kind of mean. Even her family thinks of her that way. She was mean to me and I just think . . . I don't really know. I just think it's really the way she is.

But anyhow, I started off at a dentist's office. The overall thing is here I am my age, as I'm getting older, and I'm single and I've done all this with my life. You can call it crazy, interesting, whatever, but it's just different for people and they have a hard time understanding it. Some people really like it. Some people just don't get it, which is cool. And some people when they don't get it—you know, when things aren't understood, you hate stuff. You go against it.

And that's what I had a lot of in my life, especially from women. "I don't get what you're doing," or, "You're so weird because your clothing is different and you've traveled around the world, and you're not really worried about a car or a steady boyfriend. Especially California. It's got its own way of thinking and things that you're supposed to go for. And if you're not that way, and you don't fit in, it can be challenging to people, and it pisses people off. It's annoying.

So I went through with this dentist job. Michelle, she really knew her stuff as far as the computer goes. And she tried to teach me, and I was learning. There was no problem. But she just really was mean and the rest of the office knew it, too. And it's the same thing I went through [with] Kathy, where I was living. It was just so different, it's hard for people to understand.

Anyhow, the rest of the people in the office knew that Michelle was different and stuff. One of the dental hygienists was going out with the married doctor and a couple people were cocaine addicts. There was one Christian man there. Oh, it was so beautiful. I'm so used to being strong, and we were in the breakroom together and he said, "Kelly, how are you doing?" I said, "I'm doing all right." And he goes "No, really. How are you doing?" When he said that to me, my eyes watered up and I said, "I'm struggling. I'm struggling and Michelle's so mean to me, and I'm trying to play strong and cool." He goes "I know what you're going through. Don't worry, it's a crazy office." He knew it, too.

I sent him a postcard when I left, too. I said, "God, you were like an angel for me there." It was really lovely for God to put him in my—he goes "I know what it's like, Kelly. And I told him some of the stupid stuff that she had accused me and stuff. But it was lovely.

I got fired from that job, and that was when the Gulf War started. While I was taking appointments, a lady called up and she goes “Oh, I’m sorry. We have an appointment today. I’m supposed to bring someone in, but I can’t come in because the Gulf War just started.”

You remember, there was such a buildup to that, and was it going to start or not? And then it started and it really affected her. And that kind of affected me, too. Like you can tell because I’ll never forget she said that to me. Alita Adams was doing that song that I sung at the beginning, which I kind of ad libbed some of the words. But that was a very popular song, and I used to sing my heart out. It really touched me, that song, because I knew this war thing was going on.

Anyhow, got fired from that job. Went to my next job. And these particular jobs are really good to know about because they help explain who I was when I wasn’t this fascinating, amazing person traveling. I was a person going through struggles of where to live, where to work, how to fit into the society. Right? Because I was changing over the years as I traveled.

For instance, I got this next job. I think the guy thought I was pretty, and he had another gorgeous girl working for him. Somebody had left the company or did something, so she left her position to take that position, and therefore they needed someone for her position, so I got it. One thing I told people, I never told them that I didn’t have a car, I never told them that I had been traveling. I never gave all that stuff because I already knew it was too much for people to take, and I might take off again and all of that.

I started with this job. Really loved it. The girl was good to me, so not a jealous or uncomfortable thing. She was awesome to me. Trained me her job and I was learning. He used to buy bagels on one morning a week, and we’d all sit together and have all these bagels and cream cheese, and I just loved it.

So what I did, though, I walked a fair distance but it was a convenient distance through neighborhoods to get to this job. And I think he began to see me. I have a little bit of my hippie clothing and I’d come in and I’d go to the bathroom and I changed into my business attire. And I think he wanted me to go somewhere during lunch one day to do something with a car. I said, “Oh, shoot. My car’s not working.” I never said I didn’t have a car. I always had to play this game till the last moment.

I think it began to bother him. I just wasn’t the pretty girl that fit in. I was going to wear this cool jewelry and be made up in cool clothes every day, and I really didn’t have a car. I just didn’t fit in, and he fired me. And when he fired me, though, I think he called me into his office and told me all this stuff, and really just frank—not mean, not yelling, but just like really—and I was just listening, and I just made sure that I smiled and didn’t—I said, “Okay,” and I let it go and I didn’t act shocked or anything, but inside I was shocked. It was amazing. And then he wrote it all down on a paper, and I showed my friend and she said, “Wow, Kelly.” I mean, it was like . . . it was amazing. It was just so . . . bad. And nothing happened there, nothing happened at the job. It was amazing.

So, I got fired from that job. Okay, so you’re trying to save up for a trip and you’ve got your plans and your dates, and you’ve got to get another job. Meanwhile, I’m trying to hide it from the people I live with because I don’t want them to think—because we’re kind of having issues, not so much the guy but the lady. My friend’s sister was being so strange. So you don’t want these situations to gather momentum so that everything is ganging up on you. So anyhow, I just played it cool.

I got another job at the hospital. Actually, yeah, I just told her that he let me go, but he did pay me some extra money, which was amazing. I don’t know, I think he finished me out for the week or the month. But anyhow, I got a job at the hospital nearby. I loved it. I was the only white girl there. I was working with other Latinos. I

had a split shift, so I worked in the morning, they came through lunch, then after lunch we cleaned up, we prepped for dinner, and then I'd have like three hours in between.

Man, I'd go on a power walk. And talk about music, man, I'd be singing my heart out, learning songs, power walking somewhere in the San Fernando Valley and the Canoga Park area. [laughing] And then I'd come back and I'd serve food at night for the nurses and doctors.

One time I was at work, standing behind the counter. A doctor came in. There was no one else around. And he just goes [snaps fingers] without looking at me. And I see him because I'm watching him, waiting for him to say what he wants, and he just points to the food. And I walk over to him and I said, "May I have some of this, please?" And he looked at me, and he was so offended. How dare I teach him how to talk to me? Right? And I can't remember what he said or what I said to him, but I said, "No, you can talk to me nicely." So I served him. You could tell he was bitter and I think he said something like he was going to tell somebody. That was pretty much it. The next day I go to work, open up for breakfast, and then I get pulled back in the office and I get a speech about how these are doctors, and if it wasn't for them we wouldn't have our jobs. "They can talk to you any way they want to and you don't have the dadadadada."

It really pissed me off because nobody talks to me like that, I don't care who you are. It doesn't matter if you're a cafeteria server, you're still somebody worth being respected being talked to. Right? So, I had my break. I was supposed to come back at night and come back and serve, and you know, I had one little voice on my right shoulder going "Kelly, do not take this. You are worth more than this. How dare they not stick up for you? How dare they call you in the office and lecture you because you called out this doctor?" And then I got the voice on the left shoulder going "Kelly, you've got a month before your trip to go on a trip." I was going on my longest last trip, which lasted 12 years. I was getting ready to go back to Australia-New Zealand to start off with. "Just bite the bullet. Keep your mouth shut. You need your money. You need your job. You've already been through what you've been through with the dentist."

This is things I constantly went through. You know? I mean, it was going back and forth. I literally had three hours, [unintelligible] I'd be like "That's it. I'm just going to bite the bullet. Boom." And then other times it's like "No, I'm saying something." And I went three hours deciding, how am I going to handle this situation? I finally said, "You know what? I don't care if I have nothing when this trip comes, it'll work out. But I'm not putting up with this crap." And I went back to them and I said, "You know what? You can have your keys back. I'm not going to be working this shift." And I walked out of the office. I walked out. Walked out on them when they needed me. It was my shift. I said, "No way. No notice, no two weeks, no nothing."

I told my friend at home, and by this time, I was living with another lovely friend of mine, Nelly, who loved to put her name forward. She had cancer and tumors in her head and we lost her years later on a trip, but she was an awesome girl. I lived with her and her husband and they were so wonderful to live with, they really were. And I drove everywhere around with her to the doctors' appointments when I wasn't working.

I told her what happened and I said, "I don't know what I'm going to do. I'll just have to find another job." Anyhow, the next day I get a call from like the management of nurses or the head nurse—it wasn't the head nurse, it was like over the head of nurses—and she says, "Kelly, what happened yesterday? I heard this and this and I want to know from you what happened." And I told her exactly what happened and she was like so good. I thought she was going to say the same thing and echo the same thing, and she was like "No, they shouldn't be talking to you like that. As a matter of fact, we've had a lot of complaints and issues lately, the way they're talking to the nurses, so I'm going to say something here. We have a meeting every whatever, and if I talk to them, would you take your job back?" I said, "Sure, sure, as long as someone said something, because it's not

so much—I didn’t leave because of the way the doctor talked to me. I left because I was lectured about standing up for myself and nobody stood up for me. That’s why I’m not there.”

Some days later, when the meeting happened, after that she goes “Okay, man, I laid it out on the line. I told them your story, and you can have your job back if you want.” I said, “Okay, I’m happy to take it back.”

What’s that lady, Sally Fields, in that movie Norma Baker? One of them is Marilyn Monroe, but the other one is Sally Fields in that movie. But it was one of those moments. You know?

I opened up for morning, prepared everything. I stood in the middle. The cash register was in the middle and we had these bars on either side, so people could grab their trays and slide them down on each side of the cash register, so they had somewhere to put their tray while they paid you. Oh, it was so encouraging. Everybody knew me as the white girl. I used to wear these big loop earrings and had my hair in a ponytail. People were like “Kelly, we heard.” They didn’t really know me because we never really had time to talk. They just knew my face, because it was like fast. They had to eat their lunch and get back to work. People were like “Kelly, we heard what you said.” “Kelly, we heard about the meeting.” “Kelly, we heard what happened.” It was every other person, left and right. People giving me high fives.

I was so touched by it, I couldn’t believe it. It was like it echoed throughout the hospital. That was like so powerful for me.

[01:10:35] **CINDY:** You stood up for the workers

[01:10:36] **KELLY:** I did. I did. Even the girls that I worked with were like “Wow, Kelly.” The Latino girls said, “We wish we could do that, but we’ve got kids and mortgages.”

And that’s so true, and that’s the difference. I said, “I know you do and I don’t, and that’s why I said, ‘Screw it, I’m going to say something. This is ridiculous.’”

Anyhow, the boss sometime during the day [said] , “So you think they had a meeting and someone said something, but nothing was said.” And I just know he said that out of spite because he got lectured to by the person.

But the thing is I still had my trip. My ticket was bought, so like in a couple of weeks, I gave my two weeks’ notice and I was out of there. But I did give them two weeks’ notice. And I told her, too, “I just want you to know that I already had this.” But I did come back. She was cool and we were good. That was strong for me.

Went on my last trip. Went to Australia. Worked around, traveled around. Went to a place called Bundaberg, where the Bundaberg Rum is, a massive Australian rum. Went to a big youth hostel where everybody’s looking for—it’s a fruit-picking area. Went to a big youth hostel up there. I also did some picking grapes out there, and my friends got murdered. I had thought about traveling with them, but I met this guy and traveled with him instead. This was after that job and after they got murdered, which at that point, I didn’t know yet actually. Their bodies hadn’t been found.

But I’m in Bundaberg. All these travelers are looking for picking jobs and I am, too. So I got a job. I got sent out to the coast, a small lovely little company where we were packing rockmelon. We didn’t have to pick it, we just packed it. Oh, man. I could ride my bike there and walk there. It was so beautiful, just such a simple life working on the farm.

One day I'm there, and meanwhile, I had a three- or six-month visa to Australia and I'd been there for a year and a half, and I was also working illegally. This black car comes up. Okay, this isn't good. Because I was very aware all the time. And nobody around me—I kept my mouth shut because if people don't like you, they can use it against you, which almost happened a couple times in my life. But I just thought, this is Immigration. They're here for me.

Of course, these business-looking people get out, and they come up to my boss, who's right across from me. As they do, I say to the person, my friend next to me, I said, "This is for me, May. I'm busted. I've got to go. I'll say goodbye to you now." They were in shock. I said, "You'll hear."

They said to her, "Yes, we understand you have an American working here." She goes, "Oh, yeah. This is Kelly right here." "Oh, hi, Kelly. Do you have some papers you can show us?" And, of course, I didn't. I think I might have BS'ed him and said, "Oh, I have them back in my hotel." They said, "Okay, let's take you back there."

So they put me in their car, and I knew I was in trouble. All my groceries were everything, and I lived there with a girl and stuff. I had my Bible out, too. I had my Bible out, which I think they found kind of interesting, which I did, too. I just packed it all up and I said, "I'm sorry, honey." I had to show my passport is what it was, and they could see that I was passed—they said, "You're not only over visa but you're working illegally." I said, "I know."

I was really cool to them because they were just doing their job. They said, "Okay, we have to put you under arrest. You have to come with us." Before we left the area, we went through a lot of other farms, and as we drove up to the farms, you could see people scattering. Right? But with these particular Immigration officers did anybody else get arrested when I was with them.

We had to drive south to Brisbane. I had to go to the bathroom. I remember they all went to the bathroom with me and stood on the outside of the door so that I wouldn't run away or disappear. But basically, we had such a good time, we just talked about music and musicians and rock and folk and just listened to music all the way back to Brisbane.

They found out that I had a friend. They said I could call her. I said, "Marie"—the crazy girl that I went to Alaska with some years later—"I've been arrested. I've been found out." "Oh, Kelly!" She was so nervous. I just said, "No, just calm down. I'm in the car with them now. They said if I want to, I could stay with you, but if not, I'd have to stay in jail." She said, "Oh, yeah. Tell them I'll come get you. It's okay."

They're like "Okay, Kelly, you stay here, but we're letting you. We could put you in jail, but if you stay here, you've got to come back." Because a lot of people get arrested for working illegally and they disappear in Australia and they lose their passport, so I didn't want that to happen to me. But that's where they want to live, so who cares? [laughing]

Anyhow, I hung out. You can't get deported unless you commit a felony. So I wasn't deported, but I had to leave and I had to stay out of the country for about two, three years. They let me stay with my friend, Marie, and they said that I had to buy a ticket out and that I had to show my Immigration officer my ticket and when I was leaving, and I had to show up at the Immigration Office each day before my ticket left.

So I showed up Monday morning. When I got there, I saw all these people that I had met from the big youth hostel that had been waiting to find jobs. They'd all been arrested at some point, because Australian Immigration is really strict. They really go through it. I mean, talk about political correctness in this country. I'll

tell you what, Australia and New Zealand don't even think about that. That's something we didn't even touch on, but there is no political correctness there. They don't care. They do it their way and that's it.

Anyhow, I went there and I saw my friend, Kim, from Germany. Kim got arrested, too. So I said, "Kim, where are you going?" And he said, "Oh, I'm not going back to Germany." I said, "Don't you have to go to Germany after you've been arrested?" He said, "No." And I said, "Well, where are you going?" He said, "I'm going to New Zealand." I said, "Well, if you can go to New Zealand, I want to go to New Zealand." Because at that time, I'd only been out of the country for about five years now. This is my last trip. So I thought, well, I don't want to go home yet. I want to go to New Zealand."

So I went to my Immigration officer. He said, "Kelly, we don't care where you go as long as you're out of the country. Just make sure it's the same day. You've got to leave the same day that you told me you were going leave."

So I went to my travel agent and I changed my ticket for New Zealand. Oh! And then I left. I just showed up at Immigration Office in a couple days and said, "I changed my ticket." It was all good and I left, and I got a three-month visitors' visa to New Zealand and I stayed there three and a half years.

Again, I just worked. I was picking fruit, packing fruit. I was working all night in a Maori bar, cooking them breakfast in the morning, serving drinks all night. I did agency work. Sometimes on my break, I'd go to sleep. [laughing] But I just moved around and lived in all the beautiful places in the various cities. I lived down in Wellington and bartended there. That was amazing. Yeah, it was good. And then all the way down to the South Island at the ski resort in Queenstown.

While I was down in Queenstown—this was years later, so we're talking 1995-ish—I was talking to this guy who was a friend of mine and we were sharing more experiences, and we realized that we knew each other before. He was my friend in Australia who had also gotten arrested. He told me where he went. He went somewhere through Asia. I said, "I came here. I've been here ever since." It was just so amazing that I met him that many years later. And he knew what I was talking about because we'd been through it. We'd seen each other at Immigration.

Anyhow, love, I stayed there for three and a half years traveling around. There were some poor times, but just kept working illegally.

[01:18:38] **CINDY:** Where did you go next?

[01:18:47] **KELLY:** Oh, and that's when I was on the show, Hercules 2. It's an American show but they made it down there [for the protection?] . Years later, I saw myself on TV on Hercules 2. It blew me away.

Yeah, so just traveled around, and then made my way back up to, I think, Auckland again. I was still in contact with my friend, Marie, from Australia, who I had made friends with there, who let me stay with her when I got arrested. It was like three years later. She had gone to England and found some schooling that she liked and wanted to go back. Her and her boyfriend has also met some friends in Africa and they wanted to go there, so she said, "Kelly, why don't you come with us? Let's do this trip together."

So I was saving my money to make up with her, so I left New Zealand and I flew to Australia. I just went to the airport, and I knew what gate to go to. And as I went to the gate, I saw her and her boyfriend coming through. We both got on a plane at the airport—we met there—and we went to Africa. I went to Zimbabwe and Zambia, and I traveled around there for about a month. We went to Victoria Falls and I did the rafting and everything. I really realized how cheap places were then, too, because we were able to fly around the country and it's really

lovely because you look out the window and there's these herds of all sorts of elephants and animals of all kinds walking around.

We went to a place called Bulawayo [Zimbabwe] and then we took the train to the mountains in this really hippie-fied beautiful mountain place where they wanted me to stay. Had I not been traveling with Shane and Marie, I could have just stayed there, but I had my ticket out. I should have canceled it. Man, it was so beautiful. Oh, it was an awesome place. But this is what happens when you get traveling with people.

So, I did that, and Marie left before we did because she wanted to go back up to London and do some training. That's where I was on my way, too, because we're all buying our ticket to the same place. For some reason she tried to cancel one of our tickets, and that put us in a real squeeze for about a day. We had to convince the guy to reinstate all the tickets so that we could all get on the plane when it was Shane and my time. I don't know why she did it, but it was a point of contention.

Then I got up to England. When I was living and traveling around Australia at that time, I had been picking fruit, and my two friends that were murdered, I'd met lots of Europeans and English people. So my friend had a house already. He was younger than me, and when he was younger than that, his mom knew he was smart and went to the stock exchange and said, "Hey, can you get my son a job?" So she got her son a really good job, so he already had his house paid for.

I was out of money. My idea was I was going to visit England and then go back to the States. At this point, it had been about five years at this time. He said, "Just stay with me. You don't have to pay rent." I thought, okay, but I had a ring in my nose, and my hair was braided, and I looked like a hippie. I'd just come from Africa. I got off the train in England and there were people in suits, and black and navy everywhere. There was just no way I was going to be able to do anything there to fit in because I was so hippie-fied and Africanized. [laughing] But because I just had this room, I thought, well, I don't have to spend any money here.

I realized how much information there they have for travelers. I began to look through their travel magazines and there's all these agencies and places to stay and little ways to make money. I made this appointment with an agency. I just thought of the off chance, but I knew they weren't going to like me because you have to be all businessy and I hadn't been on a computer. When I left the States, we were still on DOS. Microsoft WORD had come in and I didn't know much about it. So I started going to the library and training myself and picking up my speed for typing again—because I hadn't typed in a while because I'd been doing all these traveling jobs, you know, picking fruit and nanny, housekeeper and bartender.'

I learned WORD. I picked my typing speed up. I learned some EXCEL and some PowerPoint. I was all ready for this agency interview. We had scheduled it on the Wednesday or Thursday of one week, and my interview was supposed to be the Monday of the following week. So I had the whole weekend to go through, but instead, they called me back Friday and they said, "Kelly, are you still working for work?" I said, "Yeah, I've got an interview with you on Monday." They said, "Oh, forget about us. We want you to show up at such-and-such a place in London"—this really cool kind of newly constructed place—"for a company called Franklin Mint."

Franklin Mint is an American company that makes all these trinkets. I call them dust collectors. So I showed up there and it's awesome. Because I didn't have stuff. I had a ring in my nose. I went from African hippie to kind of like 1990's grunge, because I was looking for black clothes, but all I had was like a miniskirt with my black tights and my laced-up Doc Marten boots. I kind of got a little bit grunge when I lived in New Zealand, but I just put my hair up in a big thing, and my nose was pierced, and I thought, oh, god, if I can just get through this.

Because the agencies wouldn't take me, and they're who you really have to impress. But I didn't have to go to an agency. So I showed up at Franklin Mint. It was a 10-key job. I had the job for months. They liked me. The first day, I didn't have to work with the public. I was just with a bunch of people. We're all doing 10-key. Fantastic job. They had a great Christmas party at Christmastime. They put on the best—they rented out all these grand ballrooms of this hotel in London. We had food and alcohol and hors d'oeuvres and aperitif and everything. Bands, and a big room of dancing. I wore my Doc Martens again and everybody that was interesting, but I looked so cute. It was just a great party. Oh my gosh, it was a good job.

And it was a pivotal point in my life because I had thought I was going home, and at that time—let's see, I left New Zealand in 96, so it was 96 and I had left the U.S. in 1991. I didn't have a lot of money, so I was going to go home. But with this Franklin Mint position, I was able to open up a bank account, save some money. I went out and bought about two business outfits so that when that job was over, I could go to my next agency, interview with them, and just keep getting work.

So pretty much for that first year, I sort of hung out with Maria, but luckily, she was staying in a youth hostel and I got to stay with my friend, Steve. Honestly, she was just someone who caused problems wherever she went, so she was just so much trouble. She eventually moved on and went back to Africa and kind of messed up her life and had to go back to Australia. But I just stayed in England. She was just trouble, so I stayed away from her.

I lived in Steve's house. I rented a room, although I didn't have to pay any rent. And I got these jobs and started working through agencies, saving money. Then Steve moved down to Brighton, but he told me about this old lady two rooms away who used to rent rooms out. So I went and knocked on her door once and I got to rent a room with her.

Now, she was a bit funny, but we were okay. She would take the Russian people in and they'd go to school or whatever they wanted to do, but she would give them the lease. She would give them the most inexpensive, cheapest food. I don't know. It was just something I noticed. It was never like, okay, let's treat them well. She was a bit funny, but at least I got to rent a room from her.

But before I actually did that, though, Steve told me to ask her and I thought, well, I'm going to go to Ireland and I'll ask her when I'm ready to come back to England. So I went over to Ireland, found jobs through agencies. Then they wanted to give me a lot of money when I quit because it was time to go. I had already been to Ireland on that previous European trip, which was fantastic. This time I mostly just stayed in Dublin where I lived.

When I was ready to go and carry on with my travels—because, you know, the winter was coming and I wanted to do something different, because I met this guy in Ireland who was my friend, who was a traveler, and he had just come from teaching English in Korea. So I thought, well, heck. He's like "You can do that, Kelly." And I thought, gosh, I've never been there. I'd love to go there. I've never been to Asia. That would be cool.

That's what got me going. And yet, when I got paid, I was like "But you go over there. You go to this building and get your money." I was like "Why so much money?" And they were like "Well, if you're only a temporary worker, you get your taxes back."

And the reason I was able to kind of fake my way in England and Ireland is because they use this thing called a Temporary National Insurance Number, I think it was. They'd give it to all the Commonwealthers. I wasn't a Commonwealther, but I just did what they did. I just put something like TN for Temporary National, and then F

or M for whether you're a female or a male, and then your birth date. So I would just do what everybody else was doing. That's how I faked my working.

Anyhow, I left Ireland; came back to England to do some more work; knocked on this lady's door. She let me rent a room from her. Then I saved my money and I was getting ready to go to Korea. So I gave her notice and I flew to Korea from London. When I got there, I just traveled around Korea. I loved all their tea shops, and their crazy desserts and teas were my favorite. Most people I met, they were working. Some of them had TEFL certification, some of them didn't. Some of them had college degrees, some—I didn't. Some of them had permission, some of them didn't. Because you could get in trouble if you didn't, but a lot people were doing it anyhow, so I thought to do it.

But the thing is, I wasn't really working. I still had enough money to where I could travel. And also, no one was really giving me a solid block of teaching. A couple of people just said, "Oh, Kelly, will you take my this and this?" And I thought, well, I don't really want to do that. I'm going to start teaching if I can really take some solid work. Thankfully, I wasn't that desperate.

The thing is that I had \$2,000 on me that I had saved, and I didn't think that was much. So my whole idea was to come to Korea and save more. But when I started hearing from people that "Wow, Kelly. You've got \$2,000 on you"—and making comments and remarks like that, I was like "Yeah, what? That's nothing." So I thought I was going to make more money in Korea and then maybe take off traveling and come back to England.

I knew that I didn't have any money on me, but people kept trying to explain how much money that was in Thailand, and I'd never been to a Third World country before. I'd been to Zambia and Zimbabwe, but that was all. I had a little money then, and I was only going to stay for a month there. So I began to think of what they were saying. I thought, gosh, I'd love to go down to Southeast Asia. I've never been there. But it scares me that I only have \$2,000. But I kept hearing it from more and more people. "Oh, man, if I had \$2,000 on me, I'd go."

So I decided to make the move. I had overstayed my visa in Korea, so I was a little bit nervous about that one. Once again, I overstayed my visa and my friend knew it. One day he came to me with the national paper there, the big paper. He goes "Kelly, look. Look in this paper. Front page. 'Amnesty for all overstayers.' This is your time to leave. This is your time to get out of here safely. You go to that airport, you go on to Southeast Asia if you want."

Finally, after hearing from so many people, I was encouraged to go down there. I wanted to go down there, even if I only had \$2,000 American on me. "You just make sure you get to the airport. Now, they're going to try something with you." And he was a Westerner, but he knew his stuff because he'd been there for a while. He said, "You just keep saying 'amnesty, amnesty,' no matter they say or do to you."

Sure enough, I went there, and boy, they were all over me when they saw my passport and that I'd overstayed my visa. Then they brought me in a back room, but I knew there was nothing they could do and I just—I couldn't even understand what they were saying or what they were trying, but whatever they said, I just said, "Amnesty." I didn't even go into an explanation. I didn't argue a case. I just said, "Amnesty." I just looked at them and said, "Amnesty." And I knew they could do nothing to me.

So they had to let me go and get on the plane. Then I had this really cool knife—and this was before 9/11—it's a kind of a fruit knife that people carry on with them quite often down there because they're always eating pears and apples, and they always have a knife to eat fruit on the road. I really like that habit, so I bought a fruit knife,

and I really wanted my knife, too. So I just made sure—she didn't want to give me back my knife, but I got my knife before I left.

I got on the plane and I was just like, I made it. I made it out of Korea. It's just a bit different in Asia. I'm like, they tried to hold onto me, or maybe probably get money out of me or something, and they didn't. I just kept saying, "Amnesty." I was just so grateful for that miracle of a person to come into my life and tell me. And that other people told me about going to Southeast Asia and I made it, and I was on a new adventure.

When I got on the plane, I met this guy from the Vietnam War—he was a Vietnam vet—who lived somewhere in the South Pacific with a wife he was married to. And every year at the same time, him and all his ex-Vietnam vet buddies meet in Thailand—which was where I was flying to—to get together and just have a crazy time together.

This was back in the days of smoking and drinking on planes, so this guy was constantly getting up out of his seat and smoking and then coming back. And we were sharing gin and tonics and having a talk. He's like "Kelly, you just stick with me, man. We're going to take you out tonight. We're going to be good to you. I'll show you where to go. I have a big suite that I get there all the time. You can stay in my place, no problem."

And I got off the plane with him. I was in culture shock because there was people all over the streets, all these food carts. I was in a rickshaw. I'd never been in one of those. They just drove us straight to where he told them. We put our stuff in his room, and it was a big room, more like an apartment. And we went to the bar and sort of sampled some like tropical drinks, which I was so excited about—flowers and butterflies and everything. His friends ended up showing up. We meet in the bar. We had a couple of drinks. All these guys flying in from around the world that live in various places. It was amazing. They'd been doing this for years.

Then we went out and he took me to all the strip joints, so that was my first education in Thailand. It was interesting. It was interesting how they parade themselves, and they need money so much that they're parading themselves. And here I am with these guys that are supporting this. It was also weird for them that I was a girl. But, you know, I wanted to be open. I was learning a culture. I think you just have to be open whether you agree or disagree with something. That's what I saw and that's what we did. And we just went to parties where people were socializing, which was a lot of Thai women trying to look good for someone's attention or trying to gather somebody's attention for money. It was like "Who's this white girl with you?" But we had a good time.

Eventually everybody went back and we went back to our place, and this guy didn't accost me at all. I got to sleep on the pull-out couch or something. The next day he was getting Viagra for his trip. That was his his main goal, because that's what his buddies do is drink and Viagra and I'm in Thailand. He said, "On our way, I'll put you on the bus to where you need to go, where other travelers go." And that was it. That was my introduction to Thailand.

Then I just traveled around Thailand and met people. Instead of going south in Thailand where everybody else goes, I went over to Koh Chang, which means Elephant Island. It's near the border of Cambodia. I met a girl down there and she wanted me to go to Cambodia with her, but in order to go to Cambodia—all these countries now, because you're getting really regulated in Asia, it's a little bit more regulated and things—I didn't have my forms filled out so they weren't going to let me go, even at the last moment. So I had to say goodbye to her and I just carried on through Thailand. Went up to Myanmar and then I went through—I actually extended my visa in Thailand, which is a major process but it gave me two weeks more.

That's because I realized how far \$2,000 can bring you, especially living like me, as a traveler. Then I traveled into the middle of Laos, and I went to the north of Laos and all the way to the south Laos and stayed there for a month and a half and extended my visa again. I loved it. I always wanted to stay longer.

Then I went into Vietnam and I met this girl on a bus. I'm still in touch with her, this German girl. But all the way up to the north and all the way to the south. Vietnam was different, though. Vietnam was definitely—I went to Vietnam before they opened up to be the year of traveling Vietnam, which I believe was 2000. I was there in 1999 and it was just like, oh, boy, they'd be yelling at you from across the street. "Hey, come over here and eat! Hey, I've got nice shirts!" Yelling at you everywhere to buy. If you buy a canoe ride, they always make sure there's a seller in front and she's just hassling you the whole time.

But what an amazing place. Lots of colors of green. I tried to get my visa extended there and I made a mistake by leaving it at a company and I was on my way to Phu Quoc Island, which was southwest, right under Cambodia, and I couldn't find it. I was staying in a coastal town, so the next day I could take the boat to the island and I couldn't find a place to live. I was walking around 11:00, 11:30 at night. I met another Vietnam vet who was married to a Vietnamese girl because everybody that was trying to help me on the streets realized that I spoke English and I was American and I need some help, because I was getting a little panicky.

But they couldn't help me either. They took me to the police officers and the police officers couldn't do anything for me. You can get in trouble if you let somebody stay at your place, so I thought these people would at least let me stay with them but, no, they wouldn't let me do that.

It was still the middle of the night and I had no place to go. I finally met these Europeans who brought me to their room, and we were just hanging out and staying up. I told them the situation. I said, "He'll never let me stay up here." And sure enough, he came up—the guy, head of their hotel—and says, "You need to have a passport. What are you doing? It's too late. You've got to go back." And I told him my situation and he just let me pay him \$5.00 and I got to stay. So thank God. That was strange.

[01:38:13] **CINDY:** You got your passport back?

[01:38:14] **KELLY:** All over Vietnam. My passport came back and I had the extension on it. But never leave it anymore because every bus and every hotel that you stay in at that time—I don't know what it's like [now—you had to be in a government-run. It was all controlled. It was not like in Thailand or whatever, you just take whatever bus you want.

Then I went to Phu Quoc Island and that's when I stayed with that family. This Vietnamese guy met me, and he wanted to practice his English to he let me stay at his family home. His family had turned their backyard into this nightclub, so people came from everywhere. It was amazing. Amazing beaches. Pug Quoc Island. Look it up. It's out in the middle of nowhere. It's amazing.

I stayed there for quite a while. He drove me around. I wasn't eating meat at that time, but when you're traveling you're a little bit more flexible. He took me to this village on the other side of the island where the people completely make their money by grabbing these certain sort of crab or shellfish of some sort. So we bought a bunch there, and we're out on our motorcycle—just all by motorcycle—driving back to his family home. Then his mom and his sister were cooking. They can see I don't know how to break it up or eat it and they were just laughing at me. So they helped me eat my food, you know? [laughing]

Yeah, very amazing, bizarre place to be. Just wonderful. I met this teacher there, and I wanted to be able to support him but I just couldn't. I told him I'd send him stuff and I never did. You just fall in love with people and your heart ends up around the world, you know?

Anyhow, ferry back and then that was it. I made my way back to Thailand by bus and I think I was there for just a little time. It's funny, because when I was in the last of Vietnam, the girl that wanted me to come to Cambodia with her originally where I couldn't get through, she had met a Vietnam boy. He was in southern Vietnam and we had ran into each other when I was there. This is months later. Then when I went back to Thailand, I met a girl from Europe who was just getting out of some kind of a cab and she had taught me when I was first in Thailand how to go around the guy t-shirts and sell them back at markets and stuff. Anyhow, it was funny seeing her.

And then I started using London as a—I lived there for that whole year, including Ireland. And then when the winters came—which is when I went to Korea because it's warmer there—I'd take off for the winter so I could not experience the winter in England. Then I would work during the summer when the English people wanted their holidays. So, yeah, it was turning summer, getting too hot in Southeast Asia, so fly back to England, and as soon as people start leaving on their holidays, then I'm getting a job.

CINDY: It's not stopping. We're having to take a little break. She will be back in a moment.

[through]

Okay, where do you want me to go now?

[01:43:06] CINDY: Well, you're in—

[01:43:07] KELLY: I'm going to mention a couple of my music experiences that I haven't talked about.

[01:43:11] CINDY: Okay, good.

[01:43:11] KELLY: I'm going to wind up the traveling thing. Are you ready?

[01:43:17] CINDY: Yes, go ahead.

[01:43:19] KELLY: I just wanted to say that as far as music, when I lived in New Zealand I did music with people. I was recorded on a couple albums. I did some background harmonies with a particular band, which I can't really remember right now. Then when I lived in England, I joined the Beckenham Chorale in Kent. I loved it. Lots of classical, lots of learning. Just beautiful. Lovely people.

I remember getting into politics then when Tony Blair was running against somebody, I can't remember, and Tony won. When Tony first won, I remember that. That's when I was living there.

That's pretty much the music. And then, other than the group that I recorded with and sang with in New Zealand and made a couple albums and then the Beckenham Chorale, it was just me singing with buskers, just meeting people who would be playing guitar, and that was really a treasure when that came together and I found that. So that was it.

Basically, I just started using England as a place to work and save money and travel. So when I was in Southeast Asia, I met a girl that started telling me about India and [lassies?] and wonderful food. I said, “That’s where I’m going next.”

So when I left Southeast Asia and came back to England, I found a place to live again, and I saved my money. Actually, I was doing temp work, and then I didn’t want to take the train into the city anymore. I wanted to kind of work more locally, so out in the village in Kent in Beckenham where I stayed, I found a local job. It was with lawyers. I was a legal secretary, which I’d never really thought much difference. But as I was overhearing these girls in the next office, they started talking about “Wow, if you go down to those legal secretary agencies in downtown London, you can really make the money.”

That’s when I decided, okay, I’m going to make more money. I’m going to get rid of this job and go just fake it, especially if I could talk the talk a little after having worked in this legal office for a little while. So that’s the job that I really took for a while that lasted—it was paying me about 14 pounds an hour, which was lovely, and I could make money fast and then get out of England.

So I went to India and I met some people. I had no idea where I was going. I met a lady on a plane, who was taking her ill daughter to a Ayurvedic place, and I went there. It was called Healthy Acres. I ate Ayurvedic food and I had oil massages every morning. I forget what it’s called, but when they drip the oil on your forehead. And I had a termite mud put all over my head and sat out in the sun, and all these crazy things. But I loved it! And it was so cheap.

Anyhow, India is a humongous country. I went around and traveled. Just loved it, just read about it. I think my plan of attack, as I toured the latter part of my traveling, I either had a Let’s Go or a Lonely Planet. So before I’d even go, I’d rip out the chapters that I wouldn’t go to to lighten my load, so that’s how I would decide where I would go, and by people from word of mouth. Then, when I was done with that area, I’d rip that chapter out of my book—anything to keep your pack light. I had my Bible and I had clothes. I was on the road for quite a long time. [laughing]

That was my first time in India. Came back and worked in London again, saved money, and wanted to go back. It’s such a big country, there’s places to see. I went back there, and while I was there, I met this German guy in my first month, who liked me. I supposed I liked him, but mostly it was just that I had been single for so long and I had been thinking about settling down. I really hadn’t had that many boyfriends in my life. He was the first guy who was three things that I guess made a difference. He was as tall or taller than me, he wanted to take care of me financially, and he was old as me. I never got any of those, especially not all together.

So I decided “Okay, you want to live together? Okay, but I’ve got to go back to the States.” Because at this time, I’d been out of the States for 10 years now. And it’s all London’s fault. If I didn’t know how to figure out work in London, I wouldn’t have stayed away so long. Also “I hadn’t been really to the Mediterranean yet and I want to go to the Mediterranean, so let me do that.”

He had to fly back to Germany anyhow because he was only there for a month. I still had five more months in India, so I traveled around India. We stayed in contact. When I left, I went back to England for a little while. I worked like a month and saved some money, and then I went over to Berlin, which I’d never been to. And I went over to—what’s the place with the spirals?—Prague, and just a couple places that I didn’t make the first time. I visited my friend in Holland or Denmark, and then I finally made it down to Spain and Italy and Greece and all the places that I didn’t go my first trip. It was great.

Then I wanted to go home. I wanted to see my sister, maybe see my friends, because I really thought I was settling down now. I was taking it seriously, or at least I thought I was. I flew back to the States from Greece, and it was right after 9/11 so it was two months later. I bought my sister this big Greek doll, so they really did go through my stuff. I'm not a person who's ever had an issue with that. I'm happy that they go through people and stuff. I've got nothing to hide. People who don't have anything to hide have nothing to worry about—my motto. But, yeah, there was definitely a difference as far as people going through stuff.

I made it back to L.A. I'd spent a lot of time away from my sister, in my childhood and also my adulthood because I was traveling, but I was always the one that reached out. Because I was the one that moved around, I was always the one that put the effort into reaching out to my sister and my friends. They wouldn't have a clue where I was, so I just put a lot of effort into me being the one to reach out.

She always had situations going on, bad situations. I got myself in a bad situation. I didn't know she was as bad as she was, but by going back to her place put me in a crazy situation. Put my life in jeopardy a couple times, and the police came. So basically, it wasn't that good of a visit. It's just, as you're talking about traveling and all these things, what people don't understand is the hard part is trying to find a place to live, or at least a place to stay till you have a place to live—to either live for a while or live for a little while so you can save money and leave again. Those were my major struggles in traveling, and so a difficult visit with her.

Lovely to see my friends, but it was like, okay, [Hogues?] , I'm ready to get out of here"—that was this German guy's name—because he wanted me to let him know. So he bought me the ticket because I specifically told him, "If you're willing to do this, we can do this, but I've got to tell you, normally I have money on me because I go back and I work and I save my money and come back. But if I'm going to do this traveling, I'm just going to get back to California for a little while, and by the time I see you, that wouldn't have left me enough money time to work." So he said, "Oh, that's okay."

So he bought me my ticket. I flew to Germany. Picked him up. We went to India. We started off in the south with our [end field?] —whoops!—and it was lovely down there, it was great. Then we moved up to Almora, which is at the foot of the Himalayas, up in the state of Uttarakhand, which is north of Delhi. Used to be part of Uttar Pradesh but they created their own state. And [Hogie?] had been up there and met a couple Westerners up there, so we stayed in a hotel there along the mountain road, and then we found a place to live. Your landlord in India can either make or break your stay in India, and ours kind of broke ours.

Hogie actually had a girl from back in Germany that I didn't know about, but I kind of figured it out later. I was finding out that I didn't really love him and the guy was a bit of an idiot, so it didn't really matter to me because I was going to leave him. [laughing] But in the meanwhile, he had gone back a time or two to Germany and I saw that stuff was going down, and I realized Eric, who helped us find our house, had made some kind of warning to us and yet not telling us that the girl who suggested he live there before us went through a lot of stuff. She just kept giving him money and everything, whereas when they met me, whatever they gave, they got worse of. They hated me for that.

It was difficult, but, yeah, it was awesome living there. We'd just go hiking, we'd go sit at the cafe. We lived in the mountains. We went on amazing couple of great hiking and backpacking trips. Good. It was just hard with the landlord. Then I finally decided, okay, this isn't a relationship that I should be in nor does the Lord want me in this relationship, and I've really got to get going. This is not good. I'm not happy here.

So I left Hogie and I went to Italy to visit a friend, and me and Hogue, you know, the cold weather was coming, so when the cold weather comes you go down south to Corella and areas like that. When I left Hogie, I went on a backpacking trip, and that was during the time that we were supposed to leave, so Hogie just left down south,

so I never really saw him again. Because I came back to India after my backpacking trip with my friend and he was gone, knowing that I had left him because he came back from the cafe that day and I had taken all my stuff.

I just decided to see if I could make a little money in Italy somehow, just because I had a friend there and I knew I could stay with her. So I flew to Italy for a while, and on Christmas Day we were going to go out and have Christmas. But my friend's husband had to stop at his physical therapy place to check something and they said, "Oh, while I'm doing that, you can use the e-mails," because I said, "I've got to use my e-mails." And I got two e-mails that day that said Hogie had been in a motorcycle accident and that he had died.

I already had my ticket to Italy, and when the time came—in a few days or a week or whatever—I went back [to India]. When I got to Delhi, I saw one of my friends in Delhi and he had heard and I had heard. He said, "Okay, Kelly, I'll"—I don't know if he took the train or if he rode his motorbike with me all the way back to our village, but Hogie gave him a key so he had a key to get in. Because I didn't have a key. I left him, right? I took all my stuff and left.

So he let me back in, and then my landlord comes around like within minutes after. He's like "What are you doing here?" "This is Kelly's place. I've got a key. Hogie's not here anymore." The landlord tried to tell him that he had given Hogie \$5,000. They're just always trying to get your money and cheat you in some way.

My friend, who was also from Germany as was Hogie, said, "Look, Kelly wasn't here. You didn't make it with her. She doesn't know, neither of us know if this is true. So it that's something you did with Hogie, then that's your business. It has nothing to do with Kelly."

So I went in the house and I just started organizing it. We had months paid in advance, so the landlord already had months but he was trying to get us out so he could get someone else and make more money. This is dodgy. But he had been very destructive to us. I won't go through the details of what I did, but I pretty much trashed the place before I left. Because he thought I was just going to be another white woman who would take his machosim, male crap, and I wasn't, India or not. So I nailed him.

Basically, though, like we had the water carrier guys, we had the wood carriers, just Indian boys we know. I just gave all of Hogie's stuff away. I let them take things that they may need, things that were important—clothes, shoes, things that they really liked. Jackets. Things that people with maybe less money couldn't have. And I gave a lot of it away, and then I tried to sell as much as I can, our kitchen stuff.

We had a bank account, and I went to our bank account and closed most of that down. Took the money out, which, of course, I was grateful for. We had a little stash in our fireplace, so I cleared that out. We had a hole in the wall with some money in it, so I cleared that out. I just sold and gave everything away. Almost destroyed the place without destroying it. It still had its shell. [laughing]

But I left. I snuck out of there and I left a big old padlock on the door. I went up to Dharamshala to do yoga and I met this guy there, and I heard about it. He goes, "Oh, my girlfriend's coming." I said, "Oh, great. I can't wait to meet her." So when she came, I introduced myself. I said, "Where did you come from?" "Almora." I said, "Oh, I used to live there." She goes "Yeah, I know. I heard about you." [laughing]

So it was a big thing there, and I'm glad it affected him because he needed to know that they can't like constantly rip and thief people off, or destroy them so much they're looking for bribes. We call it baksheesh in India—bribe money, bribe money. You know?

Anyhow, I left that place. It's interesting being in India because as a single woman, you've really got to stand up for yourself. So I have a little edge on me today. I had a bigger edge probably when I came back, but I probably

did some things that other people wouldn't do because of the whole poor Indian factor, but I didn't think about it that way. I just constantly stood up for myself.

Getting back from that area to Delhi was interesting, too. I went back to Delhi and I went all the way down to Corella, and I got my first yoga-teaching certificate at the Sivananda Ashram. It was awesome. I was still kind of processing Hogie's death, though, and realizing here was this guy I knew, and he had so much that could have happened, and he just kind of destroyed it by the decisions that he made. It took a while. I didn't love him, but I cared about him as a person. So just dealing with the decisions that he made and how he would get himself into trouble.

That was it pretty much. That was my last time. And when I'd left England that time, I had sent all my stuff back home to California via this company. So I had no more clothes to go back to London in. I got my teaching certificate, and after that I heard about this really cool ashram up in Dharamshala, so I decided to live there for a while. I was doing yoga about four to six hours a day. I was in the best shape ever.

And then it was time to go, basically because I was running out of money. Had I left earlier, I would have had more money on me, but I was trying to prolong my return to the States. Because now it's 12 years.

I didn't mention, but when I was in Greece, when I told Hogie, "Okay, I'll go to India with you, but before that I've got to go to the Mediterranean." I was in Greece and I met these girls from Seattle. They said it was a cool place. I had thought of Portland, Georgia. She said, "Oh, get here. You'll love it. We'll take care of you, help you find a job. You'll love it." They were very extending and welcoming and I thought, oh, this would be good.

I stayed in touch with them a little in that time, and then before I left, I e-mailed and said, "Okay, I'm coming, I'm coming to the States." I never got an e-mail before I got on the plane leaving India, so I was a little bit scared. I hadn't been in the States in 12 years, so I thought, well, I'll just get on the plane and I'll check for e-mails there or I'll call them when I get to the airport. I flew all the way back through Seoul, but I was in Seoul and I was already full of fear. I just knew things were not going to go well. I just knew I was being ignored, basically, and I thought, oh, god. And I knew I didn't have any money.

I finally did the layover. They put us in a hotel, and did the last leg to Seattle. I got there and I went to the phone and nobody answered their phone. I called for about five hours, and then I waited and then I'd try again. In the meanwhile, I'm watching all these arrivals coming in and getting hugs. I'm thinking, oh, they've people that love them and hug them, and they've got money for somewhere to stay tonight, or at least a meal for tonight. I was like, oh, god, what have I done? It was terrible.

I had \$30 on me, and I went out to the shuttle and I said, "Hey, can you get me to this address?" Because thankfully, they gave me their address—which was amazing—at some point. I must have had it from years ago, or a year ago before that, whatever it was. He said, "Yeah, I can bring you there for that much money." It was all the way in Ballard. I showed at their door and they were in shock.

One of them was really cool to me. She was nice, she was awesome. But one of the girls that I had met in Greece, she was down in Arizona going to university. The other girl was in Ballard, but she never asked me to come by. Never. No extension. And the girls' house that I showed up with, her roommate was fine but she was in shock. I think she'd just gone through something with her boyfriend. I think they were just trying to avoid me and not call me back. I could tell.

I just tried to stay nice the whole time. I slept on the couch, and then I figured out there was a food bank down the street. Then I got food stamps, she kind of liked that because I could try to get food stamps or in the food

bank, so once in a while I would cook for them and clean the dishes. But then she was getting pissed off because she wanted to have food stamps and to go to the store, and it was just kind of weird. These were young girls, a lot younger than me, so you've got to take that into consideration. But basically, they didn't want me.

I couldn't find a job. I was up at this place—you know how some of these shops double as a post offices but they're shops and they'll do stamps—every day, and I went to visit those people some years ago and they still recognized me. "I remember you."

I was sending out my resume and making stuff up. You know? I was all over the computer, looking for work. That's how I found my City of Seattle Stagehand job, which was great. But it's intermittent and it's on call and it's all union, so I was at the bottom of the list. Not a lot of work.

It's also how I found my transition, which was I saw Bumbershoot being advertised online. So I said to this girl out in front of my building, "What's Bumbershoot?" She goes "Oh, it's this fantastic festival with music and food" and dadada. I thought, oh, great, they're looking for volunteers. That sounds good. And if you're a volunteer, they'll feed you. I didn't really have that much food and I thought, oh, I'm going to eat my heart away.

So I volunteered and I got to see all these great music. I can't remember who I saw that year, but it was great. And they gave me as many meal tickets as I wanted. I went through almost every place there and ate to my heart's content. [laughing]

Importantly, though, is my volunteer position was in the Northwest Rooms, where all the art is, and the art displays. I was speaking with a curator, telling him how I'd just come from India, and he was listening. And another guy was listening, and the curator had to be pulled away, so the other guy that was listening came to me and he goes "Hey, my friend's getting ready to go to India. Do you mind if I give him your contact details so I can put you two together and you can tell him what it's like?" I said, "Sure, I don't mind."

It was like that first night, though, that I was put out of their house, I had to get out and I was scrambling for phone numbers, and I'm new.

[End of first recording, beginning of second recording.]

[02:04:18] **CINDY:** This recording, the second recording, of Kelly Garland. It's taking place in Seattle, Washington, and the date is November 5, 2016. So Kelly, we'll start where we left off, and you were staying in a storage warehouse in Seattle, Washington, after newly getting there, so maybe you could go on with your story from there.

[02:04:50] **KELLY:** Right, so did I tell you about how I got to that storage house?

[02:04:54] **CINDY:** Yeah you mentioned you met this guy.

[02:04:55] **KELLY:** At Bumbershoot. Yeah, so he let me stay there, I stayed there for five and a half months. It was a massive storehouse down near the locks in Ballard where all the art and the glass blowers are. So he had this massive room and it had a ton of computers in it, like old computers that the University of Washington sold for cheap to him. A bit of a junk collector, this guy, he thought he was gonna have them all refurbished and then sell them and make some money. So who knows if he ever did that, but that was the plan.

It was a pretty big place, and I guess what I liked about it was that I was all by myself and I had some freedom. There was a little tiny refrigerator on the other side of the storage room, so I could put some stuff in there. And

it didn't have a shower-toilet in there, but if I walked way on the other side of the warehouse with all those artists, there was a toilet in there and a sink. So I just had a sponge bath for some months. And I slept on a chase lounge that was about three-quarters the size of my body, and he put a little space heater in there for me because, you know, this was wintertime and it was snow, cold, it was my first winter in Seattle. And I just had all my stuff that had come back from traveling around the world around me in bags and in my backpack, and he had a really awesome old stereo in there, and I used to crank that thing and sing and rock my heart out, it was great, it was the greatest thing about it.

So, I lived there for awhile, and that's when I first started getting help from the state, because before I was with these people that I met in Greece, and I knew I was gonna be homeless and I'd just started putting out my feelers for where I could get food, get education, get a job, get some place to live, anything. I was grabbing on straws just looking for anything. And while I was there at their house, I was all over the Internet looking for work, and while I was on the Internet, I found--well, this is the same time I found--how I met this guy--about Bumbershoot, I met him through being at Bumbershoot. So while I was on the internet looking for work, I was also applying for all sorts of help from the state, looking for a place to live, looking for food, looking for everything I could... Oh, I forgot what I was gonna say...

[02:07:45] **CINDY:** Well, how did you come to get the job with --

[02:07:48] **KELLY:** Right, that's where I was trying to go! So I was looking for work and I found City Job, and they were looking for intermittent stage technicians. And I didn't really know what that was, but I was gonna go for it. So I sort of inquired about how much experience you needed, but that's how I found that gig, on the internet there.

And I remember we had to go in and take a test, and I'd been on the other side of the stage, doing some singing and acting, but I'd never actually worked on the other side of the stage as a stagehand, so I didn't really know a lot. I remember there was this girl taking the test next to me and they were asking me all these technical questions, and I cheated, I looked over at her paper and I wrote what she wrote. Honestly, that's what I did to get a job. And then we had to get on stage and see how much we could carry and do we know stage right and stage left, all that. Anyhow, that's when I started that gig, but I was so low on the list in the union--and I never joined the union, you have to have a certain amount of hours after a certain amount of time and then they have to invite you, so I was so low on the list that even when I eventually left the union, left being a stagehand, I never actually worked in the union, I worked through the union. And so that's how I found that gig, and that's also when I started court reporting school.

So here's this homeless girl, you know, I'll just give you a short story about that. So I was downtown, being homeless, and I was either at the new YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] building on Third and Lenora where they have work sourcing that helps low income or poor, homeless people looking for work, or I was somewhere else, but I bent over and there was a brochure on the floor and I picked it up and it was like "court report" and I didn't know what that was, but hey I'll give it a shot. You know, I was grasping at straws, anything. So I called up and the guy starts giving me the sales speech, and I just said in my head "what is he talking about," so I stopped him short. I said, "Sir, I'm sorry, I'm gonna stop you here. I don't want to be rude, but I have no money to go to school, I don't even have the money to get on the bus to come see you." And he goes, "Well, wait a minute, if you can get up here, we can set you up with an appointment with financial aid and see where we go from there, it might be that you can get some financial help." So I said, "Okay." And somehow I learned about this place that gave free bus tickets to poor people, and I went there and they gave me free bus tickets. How did I get there? Don't know. Walked there, probably.

So I went all the way up there, did my financial aid appointment, and because I had absolutely no tax returns for years because I'd been out of the states, I had no family, I had no bank, I had nothing--I got all this money handed to me, it was just incredible. I thought, "Are you serious?" And when she told me that, which means I could get on the bus, too, and afford a bus pass, the tears just came out of my eyes because I thought, "This is incredible! These guys are gonna give me all this money!" And I know it's financial aid and you gotta pay it back, but at least it's something, because I had nothing else. So that changed my life.

So I started going to court reporting school as a homeless woman, which was a bit of a novelty for everyone there. [laughs] I was the only homeless person in school. And here I am, dragging this court stenography machine around with me in a roller bag, you know, being homeless, going to the shelter with my little backpack with my things in it plus my stenography machine, rolling like a piece of luggage behind me.

So that was me, and while I was living in this storage room that this guy offered me, he had his own place, so he was living somewhere else, and he was pretty good to me. He didn't come by hardly at all, I saw him once in a while. And I guess while I was living there, that all this help that I had looked for previously, whether it be through offices or online or something, was kind of making its way through the paper system, and eventually I got an email or a phone call. And at that time I bought an AT&T to-go phone, so I just put in what money I had, but I also started getting help from the state.

So you can see, with all this help that came through is what brought it back together. You know, I wouldn't have had a phone, and then I wouldn't have got the phone call with the job, and they were looking for me to help me. So they said they have a place for me in transitional housing, which was downtown. And downtown for me, at that time when I started court reporting school, was not a place I wanted to be. You know, I'd been down there and you're just down on the street and there's all these homeless people, and it's really not my scene, and I'm not used to that kind of homelessness, so I never really went downtown. And I got really to a place where I loved Ballard and I didn't really want to leave Ballard, and all of a sudden they're saying "We've got a place for you downtown," so I thought, "Okay, I'll check it out." And it was called transitional housing, and transitional housing is for people who come out of rehab or mental homes, so it wasn't necessarily--he didn't see a lot of girls who had just come back from traveling around the world living there. But I went down there and I thought, "Okay. I'm gonna have a proper bedroom, a real sink, a bathroom, a shower, you live with a lot of women, there's a kitchen downstairs, it's community living."

It was a little hard at first because people just couldn't figure me out, I didn't have the drug or the alcohol issues, and I didn't have mental issues, and you're just around people that do, and that can be difficult sometimes. And also there's a little jealousy there. And, you know, I gotta say that all of this story is a miracle from God because even the house lady came to me and was like, "How is it that you get help from the state?" She couldn't figure it out because she knew I didn't have any issues, those kinds of issues, which I don't know how to talk about and be politically correct, but I'm trying to. And I just looked at her and I said, "What do you mean?" because at first I didn't know what she meant, but she says, "Well, how is it--on what basis, on what grounds do you get help from the state?" And honestly, it's on the grounds of my Lord taking care of me and opening that door for me and allowing people to just have a heart for me.

And the way that that started was I found another community place to live, like a women's home, it was more of a home and not a transitional housing. And I can't remember where it was, but it was somewhere out of Seattle, and I knew it was cheap, so we had an interview and she said I can move in. And I said, "But there's one problem, I don't even really have the money to pay for this." So she gives me this card of a psychologist or sociologist and she winks at me and she goes, "Call them, and she'll get you the help." And I thought, "Wow, why are these people being nice to me?" Like, she's giving me contacts so I can get help.

So I went to this lady, which is downtown, Phyllis Sanchez, I think it was, and actually Lou's wife used to work there, that's how I know Lou's wife. And I don't know if Lou's wife remembers me to this day, that I was there. It was full of a lot of people with some issues, this lady had compassion on me, and she finally cut me off because she said, "You know, Kelly, you don't really have any issues, we gotta have this money for someone else." But you know, the Lord opened that small door for me to be able to get in and get some help. Because I had help, because she had backed up my paperwork, I was able to get help from the state, which meant food and cash, and suddenly I had the money to move into this community housing. So when I was all ready to move in, I called up this lady and she goes, "Oh no, we got someone else." And I was kind of in shock because it was so rude, we'd already agreed that I was going to move in, and then it was pulled out from under me. But you know, that's okay, because the Lord works in baby steps. That got pulled away from me, and then I went into the transitional housing. And that was much better because my work was mostly was generally at the Key Arena and the Seattle Center, more central to the city.

[02:16:32] **CINDY:** And that's when you were doing the stagehand?

[02:16:34] **KELLY:** Yeah, yeah. So that made me living downtown, being able to work downtown, as well. So it's just baby steps. But the cool thing is, is because I was going to go out there, the lady who helps put people out there is the one who gave me this card of the lady who helped me sign these papers so I could get help from the state. Baby steps, but massive step. So I start court reporting school, find out about transitional housing, a little bit reluctant to leave Ballard, but then I go in and I go in with these girls, and we have chores and we each have to make dinner a certain night, so a little bit different for me, but hey, I've been sleeping and living in youth hostels for most of my life, so it's not too different from that, just the people were a little bit different.

And then just before I found that place, I had to come downtown for some reason. So I came downtown, and I met this homeless lady, and I used to push her around in a wheelchair, and I'm not sure how much we went through on my previous interview, so some of this may overlap, but we were walking down Third and Lenora because the women's shelter used to be across the street from where it is now, next to the Jewish place that got all the shootings a few years ago. And we were going over there to eat, we were getting some food, they were feeding dinner. You know, all of these places mean a difference for these people, it made a difference for me, I had some place to eat and I got all these connections to there. And so she's teaching me how to be homeless, she's going, "Well, you just go there during the day when you have no place to hang out, and when you eat, you can go there, and if you want breakfast, you go there," and I was like "Okay, okay, she's teaching me how to do the street thing. This is cool." So as we went into the women's shelter, there was a big massive building being built across the street. And I said, "I wonder what that is over there?" and she said, "Oh, that is a YWCA building that they're building for the homeless and the poor." And I just went, "Oh my God, wouldn't you just love to have an apartment there? Oh, I want to fill out an application and find out about that place." And she said, "Yeah." So before we got our food inside the shelter, I said, "Do you want to pray with me about the Lord finding us a place?" [starts crying] And so she said, "Yeah." And we held hands and we prayed, and I said, "Lord, I ask if there's a way that you could find a place for me and--I forget her name--that you would open up an apartment for us over there." And then we finished our meal and then I didn't see her for awhile, because it wasn't long after that I had met this guy and he had given me a place to live in the storage room.

So anyhow, time is ticking by and they're still building this place, and I'm forgetting about it, I'm too involved in school and being homeless, man. So I got into transitional housing, find out about that, and while I'm living there there's a girl named Rosalie from--I think she was from South America somewhere. And because I speak a little Spanish we became good friends. And she was moving out, she made an announcement. "Where are you moving out?" She goes, "Oh you know, that new YWCA place that they built on Third and Lenora." I'm like [gasps]. She's like, "I got a place there!" and I'm like "Yeah, I think I do know that place."

And just to go back a bit, all I was doing was living in Ballard, taking the bus, I think it's the 44 then transferring on the 365, I think it is, up [Highway] 99 to go up to 130th and Aurora where I went to this court reporting school. And that's all I knew, I didn't like going into the city still. But one day I had to go into the city for something, I don't know, and I was kind of reluctant, I didn't like being a homeless person in the city. And as I walked by the women's shelter next to the Jewish Federation, is what it's called, there was a note pasted to the window of the women's shelter that said, "Tomorrow: Taking applications for the YWCA apartments." And I was like, "Oh my God, Lord, I never have to come downtown. Today I come downtown, and I see that today. And you heard my prayer, because you knew that I prayed for something, and here I'm not too late, here--I would've never known it having just stayed up and gone up to Aurora back to Ballard." So I was so excited and so grateful that I said, "Tomorrow after school, for sure I take the bus all the way downtown and I come here."

And I took the bus downtown, I went in there, there was all these homeless women, lots of them with lots of issues, it was a very surreal and uncomfortable and strange environment for me, but I said, "You know what? I'm going to get my application in, man." So when it was my time, this lady Brandy, this very small, petite girl--how do I know her? I don't know, but I knew her from somewhere else. She was the one that was helping people fill out their applications, and I was like, "Oh my God, they're gonna ask for money and all these things that I don't have records of, and I barely have friends to give them references," and I got all worried. And she just sat with me, helped me fill everything out, all the nonapplicable and I have no answers for. I was like, "Oh my God, how am I gonna BS my way through this?" because I had been used to BS-ing my way through life to get a job and to travel and just to do stuff, street stuff, make it work for me. She was so cool, we filled out that application, and again, I let it go, completely forgot about it, just forgot about it.

So months later, I'm living in this transitional housing, Rosalie is moving out, I said "Where are you going?" and she tells me about that place, I said, "Wait a second, I filled out an application for that place, too." And she goes, "Oh, well then you need to go talk to Cathy." And this place that I lived in was on Bell and Second, House of Rosa, or something like that, it's not there anymore, but it was a big thing for people who needed a place to live, and one of them was me. And so I went directly into her office, and I said, "Cathy, can I come in and talk to you?" She said, "Yeah." I said, "You know that place that Rosalie is moving out to?" And she said, "Yeah." I said, "I think I put an application in there months ago." And she goes, "You did, well come in here. Most people who live in transitional housing, various transitional housings, have their various rules, but for the most part you have to live there a year or two or three years before you develop like, you're okay to live and rent somewhere and then they find you a place to move out." But I think because of me and who I was and the fact that I had put an application in already, well she knew a lady Barbara, who wasn't there anymore, Barbara had since had a baby or two and moved on with her life, well she knew the lady Barbara who was putting people in this place. So that was a great contact again, all these baby steps that the Lord was just laying out and helping me you know?

And thank God for these public programs to help people, it takes a village to get you out from where you are. I mean, I'm still coming out. It takes a lot, I want to emphasize that, a lot of help, a lot of people think, "Oh pull yourselves up by the bootstraps," and sometimes you can do that, but for a lot of people it takes a lot. You need a phone, you need a place to put your head down at night, you need breakfast so that you can communicate with somebody that day, you need all these little things. And when each part of society offers in just a little bit, you don't have to give someone rent for like a whole year, when you just give a little it all adds up to life, to survivorship.

So she calls Barbara--and the whole thing about this apartment building at Third and Lenora was it was done on a lottery, because there's so many people applying, they've gotta do a lottery, or else you're gonna have judgemental issues. And she goes, "Oh, we've been trying to get ahold of her." So I guess I won something in the lottery, but they didn't know how, and I don't know why because I think they had all my stuff, my

information, and none of it changed, but who knows what happened, could've just been another God wink, I call it. While Barbara was on the phone with Cathy, the lady at the head of this transitional home, she made sure she had all my correct information, she said, "You tell Kelly to go to her emails." And luckily, there was a computer, you see that's another thing you need, you need use of a computer. There was a computer at the transitional housing. "You tell her to go to the computer and I'm going to email her." And I tell you, I went right over to that computer and my emails, and she said, "Kelly, the building is open now, it's ready, we've been putting people in for a couple months, we have a couple appointments, let me know when you want to come by." I mean, can you imagine? That all happened in a span of thirty minutes, I'm on the computer after talking to Rosalie, making an appointment to find my own apartment.

So I did, next week I went by, she showed me lovely places, I loved them all, but I picked a really cool place. It was in the back of the building, so it was away from Third Avenue where all the sirens and craziness was. It had a big window, it had a window seat next to the window, it was just a bachelorette. So I had my bed, a kitchen, and I remember being so fascinated, because I hadn't really had my own place ever in my life, I don't think, no. And I remember it had a sunroof in the bathroom or something that I was like enthralled with, I was like, "Are you serious?" So I was just so excited. I had the kitchen to cook, I couldn't wait, a window seat...

Anyhow, I picked the place with a big window because this was before South Lake Union was being built, I mean you got all those condos and apartment buildings now there. But before they were all built, I could look out the window and see Lake Union, all the boats on Lake Union with their lights on, so beautiful. I could see all the way to Mount Baker on a beautiful day, I could see the I-5 far away, and even the University Bridge. As the years went by, I couldn't see that much because they had built up, but people used to come into my apartment and go, "Wow Kelly." Even Barbara came in and was like, "You picked a good one with the good view." It was just the small things, I was so grateful, so grateful.

So I got that place, I moved in in April of 2004. They'd already been putting people in there for a few months. And I was so happy, but I also still had help from the state to make that happen for me, plus I was doing my job. Now again, why didn't I just have my job? I was very low on the list, so I wasn't working a whole lot but I worked as much as I could, I mean I didn't--the only days I turned down was when I was at school. Everything else I took because, you know, there's night jobs, weekend jobs, jobs that start later, that's the cool thing about working with--and that's when the SLC [Seattle Labor Chorus] used to practice right down the road, so I could get to practice in ten minutes and walk there. I could get to Seattle Center by--I mean, I used to come, sometimes I was running late, I could get there in five minutes, I'd run all the way from Third and Lenora to the Seattle Center. [laughs] That was crazy!

[02:28:32] **CINDY:** So how did you get into the Labor Chorus?

[02:28:36] **KELLY:** Okay, so then I'm working at the union, I'm living there, my life is good, I'm grateful, I'm working at the union, and I meet a lady named [pauses] wish I could remember. Well actually, I knew her, and I knew another girl at work, who I hardly knew but we were making friends but she ended up being a little bit strange. And we were talking on the phone and she said--who is Andy's sister, Andy used to sing with the basses?

[02:29:10] **CINDY:** I can't remember.

[02:29:10] **KELLY:** Okay, but you know who I'm talking about, right. Okay, so she said, "So-and-so is saying there's a group that needs sopranos," and I knew I was a soprano, and I was like, "Gosh, are you kidding me? A group to sing with? I love it!" So she says, "I'm gonna show up." And I say, "Really? I'm gonna show up, too." And so I just showed up. [laughs] And the girl--the friend that had told my other friend--wasn't there, and that

girl wasn't there. I just ended up showing up by myself, and I kept showing up every Tuesday night since then, I've been rehearsing with the SLC.

[02:29:44] **CINDY:** Seattle Labor Chorus.

[02:29:44] **KELLY:** The Seattle Labor Chorus. And honestly, when I was younger, it's interesting now with the election going on because through Facebook people from years ago in my past have contacted me, so we're all friends on Facebook. And you can tell who's with you politically because they either make comments or they like, and you can tell who isn't with you because they don't or sometimes you'll see their posts. Well, I must've grown up very politically conservative, I mean, I don't remember ever hearing anything politically, and this is my point, I had no opinion. When I was young, I didn't know anything about that, my life was too about surviving. I didn't know anything politically, I had no opinion, I really didn't. And if I did, it was probably conservative because I can tell by the way they still are, and that's what I remember. Yeah, it's very interesting, something I've only noticed since this election season. So I met so many people at the Seattle Labor Chorus, and I begin to learn political things and begin to develop an opinion. I'm still kind of conservative, to be quite honest, in a lot of ways. But I have so much more of an opinion now, and I'm much more left than I was before.

And I also have to say that I've asked God about, you know, sometimes you go through things and some of us do and some of us don't, but I asked God, "What is it that you're leading me through to bring me to here that I've joined this group, that I've met these people, that I'm learning all this stuff?" And the interesting parallel is that here I am as a woman who's homeless, who's got exposure to homeless people, to people with mental issues, drug issues, all sorts of issues, and here I am joining this group that's about--that has a lot of--I call you guys a lot of--

[02:31:47] **CINDY:** Middle class.

[02:31:48] **KELLY:** Yeah, middle class.

[02:31:49] **CINDY:** Middle or upper.

[02:31:51] **KELLY:** Yeah. And even though I've been middle class all my life, I didn't really learn what that meant, the repercussions of all that. And here I am in this group, and I say it with love in my heart, but I call you all my old hippie activist friends. I've learned so much from you guys, and you guys basically have taught me to stick up for those that have nothing. Now had I not gone through what I've gone through--and I was one of those that had nothing. So I think it's a very interesting parallel, and I can't just as a believer go, "Okay, that's coincidental." I have to go, "Lord, there's something here to teach me that I am to teach the world through this." [pauses] You know, it all amounts to something, and it goes so deep. [starts crying] And it is very personal.

So I'm so glad that I did, and through that I learned that it takes a village, it takes a lot of help to get people back to where they need to be. And unless we have people in our world like we have in the SLC--and we don't agree on everything, and I certainly don't agree with all that everybody agrees with, and if you look at it through the outside, you may think that they all agree with each other, but they don't, there's different leanings, and that's cool. But the thing is, they've taught me how to--that the difference between the people on top, the one percent, and the ninety-nine percent, the haves and the have nots. Now, I'm not against the haves, but also traveling has opened my eyes to a lot, the way other countries do it, that's the other fifty percent of why I'm an activist now.

And I've learned so much, I've learned so much through traveling, through being homeless, through being hungry, through waking up on a shelter floor with all these people around me, laying on a yoga mat, with tears

running down my eyes, saying to myself, “With everything I’ve been through, this is what my life has come to?” With waking up and seeing bakeries give their day-old stuff, white flour stuff, to people for food, which is lovely, but realizing, okay, it’s just a bunch of unhealthy stuff people are eating and that’s why a lot of them have some weight issues, and that may seem really specific and minor to some people, but that was a big eye-opener for me.

And now I’ve joined this group and they’ve taught me that we need to stand up for unions, we need to stand up for the one percent paying their fair share, that we need to stand up that we can’t just let the--and I hate to sound like a separatist--but the people on top, the people with the money, the people that have never had to go through that before, just walk all over and tromp all over and say, “Hey, get your shit together and pull your pants up and be a big girl.” It’s not that frickin’ easy. And so that is what I’ve learned, and I’m glad that my heart’s been opened and I feel very honored to have--you know, I wouldn’t put any of that on anybody, like you need to go through this--but how lovely is it to have gone through that and to have joined this group and have my eyes opened. Yeah, we can stand up, we can say something against it, we can march against it, we can sing against it, our songs can have--I love love songs and all that stuff, but other songs can have a social meaning, there’s social importance to all this. And so my activism now is just having that, learning that education in my heart so that I go out and sing with the Seattle Labor Chorus, I go out and sing with the--

[02:35:33] **CINDY:** Flying squad.

[02:35:34] **KELLY:** Flying squad. Now in this election, I’m really standing up for people need healthcare, they need food, we need to keep our rents affordable, we can’t just make apartment buildings and townhome buildings affordable to just those who work for Amazon. You know, there’s a wide group of people, we all matter, people matter, and that’s my activism, so I sing it, I share it on Facebook, I try not to get into any arguments, but I do have more an opinion and I try to put it out there, and I’m glad that I have something to say, that all of this has led up to some kind of education for somebody. So that’s my activism, and that’s how I joined the Seattle Labor Chorus, yeah. [laughs]

[02:36:17] **CINDY:** Okay, well thank you very much, Kelly, for sharing so much of yourself. I really do appreciate it. It’s been very good to hear you.

[02:36:24] **KELLY:** It’s been very therapeutic to share it, so thank you so much for interviewing me, I love it.

[02:36:29] **CINDY:** Okay, thanks so much.